

The Lowcountry Mental Health Conference

July 29 – July 31, 2026

Wednesday, July 29, 2026

Pre-Conference Sessions

6 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. (15-minute break)

Spirituality and Psychotherapy

Exploring Spirituality Within the Clinical Process

Rick Lawhon, LPC, LPC-S, NCAC

(2 CE credits)

Synopsis: Nowadays, we hear quite a bit about spirituality. For example, the 12-step approach is clear about it being a spiritual program. Also, how often do we hear “I’m not into organized religion, but I am a spiritual person”? There are multiple shows about paranormal research, TV evangelism, and the list goes on and on.

As therapists, we may be tasked with assisting clients as they engage in the deeper, spiritual existential questions of life. This workshop will give a framework for addressing spiritual issues by introducing a checklist for personal spiritual growth, a suggested list of best spiritual practices, and suggested readings on spirituality.

At the completion of this session, the participant should be able to:

1. Describe an understanding of the history of modern-day spirituality.
2. Recognize their personal stance on spirituality.
3. Identify the characteristics of the dark side of spirituality.
4. Discuss at least one new technique to use when applying spirituality in the clinical setting.

Moving with Grief and the Body:

An Experiential Session for Clinicians and Clients

Paul Denniston

(2 CE credits)

Synopsis: Grief is not just an emotional or psychological experience – it also deeply impacts us physically. When loss, heartbreak, or trauma remain unprocessed, grief can become held in the body, shaping posture, breath, tension, and overall vitality. Our body remembers. Over time, this embodied grief can affect how we feel, move, and experience the world.

In this experiential workshop, Paul Denniston, founder of Grief Yoga, invites participants to explore grief through gentle, chair-based somatic practices designed to support the body’s natural capacity to process and release emotional pain. Through mindful movement, breath, and sound,

participants will learn how grief manifests physically and how embodied practices can create space for expression, regulation, and relief.

Paul will demonstrate how Grief Yoga supports the safe, compassionate processing of grief by engaging the body directly – helping participants access emotions that may be difficult to reach through words alone. The session emphasizes listening to the body, cultivating presence, and allowing grief to move rather than remain stuck.

At the completion of this session, the participant should be able to:

1. Explain how grief is experienced and stored in the body.
2. Practice and demonstrate gentle, chair-based Gentle Yoga practices for embodied emotional processing.
3. Explore how movement, breath and sound can support the safe release of grief.
4. Develop greater body awareness and presence when working with loss, trauma, and emotional pain.

Autism and Mental Health

Key Strategies and Approaches to Treatment

Stephanie Turner, LMSW, MPH, BCBA

(2 CE credits)

Synopsis: This pre-conference session equips mental health professionals with a practical, neuro-affirming understanding of autism and its intersection with mental health, emphasizing that effective care is both achievable and well within existing clinical skill sets. This session explores how an autism diagnosis impacts brain development and functioning, the prevalence of co-occurring conditions, and the risks of diagnostic overshadowing. Attendees will review evidence-based practices for autism treatment while learning how familiar therapeutic modalities can be thoughtfully adapted rather than replaced. The presentation focuses on normalizing autism within mental health settings by shifting from abstract concepts to concrete, skill-based strategies, incorporating visual, and modifying communication approaches to ensure accessibility for non-vocal individuals – empowering clinicians to confidently and competently serve autistic clients.

At the completion of this session, the participant should be able to:

1. Describe the prevalence of co-occurring conditions and the implications for clinical care.
2. Identify diagnostic overshadowing in order to improve assessment accuracy and treatment planning for individuals with an autism diagnosis.
3. Apply practical adaptations to existing therapeutic modalities by incorporating concrete language, visual support, structured skill-building, and accessible communication strategies to effectively serve individuals diagnosed with autism and less vocal clients.

Thursday, July 30, 2026

Transforming Suffering into Wisdom

Shi Heng Yi

9 a.m. to 10 a.m.

(1 CE credit)

Synopsis: Suffering is not an error in the human system – it is an inherent part of the conscious life. This keynote explores how therapists can facilitate a shift from reactivity to insight. For therapists, this perspective invites a shift in stance: from fixing to witnessing, from controlling to clarifying.

At the completion of this session, the participant should be able to:

1. Explain at least two Chan-informed concepts related to the nature of suffering.
2. Describe cultivating inner stability as the ground for Transformation.
3. Facilitate meaning making and post-traumatic growth.

Traumatic Grief: Releasing Pain and Finding Meaning

David Kessler

10:30 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.

(1.25 CE credits)

Synopsis: Grief is inherently relational, shaping our connections with others. This session, led by grief expert David Kessler, explores how traumatic grief impacts individuals' ability to navigate relationships, reframe their identities, and rebuild a sense of purpose after loss.

While the five stages of grief—denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance—are widely recognized, Kessler introduces a sixth stage: finding meaning. He also discusses the limitations of the stage model and utilizes other models as well. These concepts serve as a transformative tool in addressing the complex emotional and relationship impacts of grief. Drawing from powerful case examples as well as his own traumatic losses, Kessler will explore how grief can either create emotional distance or foster closer connections among individuals. He will offer practical strategies for helping clients navigate all kinds of grief and loss.

At the completion of this session, the participant should be able to:

1. Differentiate traumatic grief from non-traumatic grief.
2. Describe how “meaning-making” supports adaptation from traumatic loss.
3. Apply relationship-centered strategies that reduce isolation and strengthen attachment.

When Talk Isn't Enough: Practical Tools for Working with Loss, Anger, & Emotional Stuckness

David Kessler

11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.

(1.25 CE credits)

Synopsis: Grief affects more than thoughts and emotions. It lives in the nervous system, the breath, and the body's protective responses. In this immersive lunch session, David Kessler and Grief Yoga founder, Paul Denniston, blend grief theory with embodied practice to help participants work with loss, anger, and the places we get stuck. Together they explore how grief can tip into dysregulation, how to recognize when someone is in trauma physiology, and how movement, breath, sound, and grounding can support release, regulation, and connection. Participants leave with practical, trauma-aware tools they can use for their own grief and in professional settings to create safety, build resilience, and support meaning-making after the story has been told.

At the completion of this session, the participant should be able to:

1. Explain how grief and trauma show up in the body and nervous system, including signs of dysregulation that indicate "talk" alone may not be enough.
2. Demonstrate at least one embodied technique (grounding, breath, movement, or sound) to support emotional regulation and the processing of anger and stuckness.
3. Identify ways to create a safe, supportive container for embodied grief work that supports connection to self and others.

Interstate Compact Opps & Updates for LPCs

Barbara Melton, LPC, NCC

11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.

(1.25 CE credits)

Synopsis: Confused about when you can join the Counseling Compact and practice in multiple states without having to go through the independent licensure process in each state? Get the latest updates and what the process currently is and will be for LPCs. While the session will focus mainly on the LPC Counseling Compact, information on the compacts for social workers and psychologists will also be shared.

At the completion of this session, the participant should be able to:

1. Identify the key components of the Counseling Compact.
2. Describe the implementation process of the Counseling Compact, including timelines, required steps, and roles of participating states.
3. Identify resources to track the Counseling Compact progress as well as the Social Work Licensure Compact and the Psychologist Compact (Psypact).

Beyond Medication: The Expanding Role of Interventional Psychiatry

Brittany Albright, M.D., MPH, DABOM

11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.

(1.25 CE credits)

Synopsis: For many patients with treatment-resistant depression, OCD, and other psychiatric conditions, traditional medications alone are not enough. This session will explore the growing role of interventional psychiatry, including TMS, ketamine/esketamine, ECT, and emerging

neuromodulation techniques. Faculty will discuss patient selection, optimizing outcomes, and integrating interventional strategies with standard psychiatry care.

At the completion of the session, the participant should be able to:

1. Explain the growing role of interventional psychiatry.
2. Analyze mechanisms of action, research evidence, and optimal patient selection for interventional treatments, including:
 - Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT)
 - Transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS)
 - Vagus nerve stimulation (VNS)
 - Deep brain stimulation (DBS)
 - Ketamine and esketamine
3. Discuss how to integrate interventional treatments with standard psychiatric + psychotherapy care.

Special 10-Person Q&A Session

Shi Heng Yi

11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.

(1.25 CE credits)

Synopsis: Shi Heng Yi will answer questions as to methods to address common therapeutic issues such as relationships and self-control, finding purpose, balancing ambition with inner peace.

Shi Heng Yi will discuss and demonstrate concepts such as observation, physical discipline, journaling, and meditation.

At the completion of this session, the participant should be able to:

1. Apply Chan-informed principles in their therapeutic practice.
2. Develop practical exercises for empowering patients to address topics such as anxiety, overthinking, finding purpose, and emotional control.

Advanced Applications and Interventions in Solution-Focused Brief Therapy

Elliott Connie, M.A., LPC

1:45 p.m. to 3 p.m.

(1.25 CE credits)

Synopsis: This advanced-level workshop is designed to deepen the theoretical understanding and clinical application of solution focused brief therapy (SFBT) for mental health practitioners. Emphasis will be placed on advanced clinical decision-making, therapist responsiveness, and utilizing Solution-Focused principles while working with complex clinical presentations.

Participants will engage in systematic analysis of recorded clinical sessions to examine the therapists' use of language, sequencing of questions, and moment-to-moment responsiveness within the Diamond framework. The workshop will explore advanced methods for eliciting client-

defined outcomes, co-constructing richly detailed descriptions of transformation, and facilitating session closures that strengthen client autonomy and self-efficacy.

Through structured discussion, guided observation, and supervised skills practice, participants will refine their ability to apply the Diamond Approach with increased precision, intentionality, and clinical confidence. Special attention will be given to adapting the model for clients presenting with ambivalence, difficulty articulating goals, or complex psychosocial histories.

At the completion of this session, the participant should be able to:

1. Critically evaluate their clinical use of the Diamond Approach within Solution-Focused Brief Therapy.
2. Demonstrate advanced skill in eliciting and maintaining client-defined outcomes across sessions.
3. Analyze therapist interventions for alignment with Solution-Focused principles and clinical effectiveness.
4. Apply advanced strategies for co-constructing detailed descriptions of client transformation.
5. Implement session-closing practices that measurably enhance client agency and treatment momentum.

Addressing Eating Disorders in Your Practice: Evolving Clinical and Research Perspectives on the Etiology and Treatment of Eating Disorders

Tim Brewerton, M.D.

3:15 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

(1.25 CE credits)

Synopsis: Eating disorders (EDs) are commonly occurring conditions, and clinicians are very likely to encounter them in the context of evaluating and treating other problems. There is no single etiology or basis for any EDs, but similar to other mental disorders, they result from the dynamic interplay between biological, psychological, and social factors that operate along a developmental continuum. Several advances made over the last several years will be reviewed that have enhanced our understanding and treatment of EDs, including the illumination of genetic, epigenetic, neuroendocrine, and neurobiological underpinnings. Predisposing factors linked to anxiety, mood dysregulation, impulsivity, harm avoidance, obsessive-compulsiveness and drive for thinness are exposed, triggered, and/or exacerbated by behaviors geared toward weight loss. Among a host of psychosocial factors, traumatic experiences often play important roles in predisposing, precipitating and perpetuating disorders, especially when there is a psychiatry comorbidity. This presentation will also provide an overview of evidence-based assessment and treatment approaches.

At the completion of this session, the participant should be able to:

1. Define and list the diagnostic criteria for the basic types of feeding and eating disorders as defined in the DSM-5-TR.
2. Explain three risk factors known to contribute to the development of eating disorders that exist on the biopsychosocial spectrum.

3. Describe three evidence-based treatment approaches used in the treatment of eating disorders.

Friday, July 31, 2026

Beyond One Model: Integrative Tools and Techniques for Trauma Treatment

Frank Anderson, M.D.

8:45 a.m. to 10 a.m.

(1.25 CE credits)

Synopsis: Trauma treatment is rarely a straight path and experienced clinicians know that what helps in one moment may fall flat in the next. In this keynote, Dr. Frank Anderson offers a coherent, “beyond one model” framework for working with complex trauma presentations using flexible, moment-to-moment clinical decision-making. Grounded in a non-pathologizing stance, he will illustrate how symptoms and survival strategies can be understood as organized responses shaped by nervous system adaptation, attachment history, and protective internal dynamics. Participants will strengthen their ability to assess what a client’s system is communicating in real time, without forcing a linear narrative or overcommitting to a single methodology.

Building from this integrative foundation, Dr. Anderson will demonstrate how to track shifts in arousal, dissociation, and relational engagement, then select interventions that match the client’s capacity and clinical priorities in that moment. Drawing from parts-informed principles, polyvagal awareness, somatic/embodiment tools, and attachment-focused strategies, he will highlight practical ways to work with extreme reactions, reactivity, shutdown, and destabilizing patterns while maintaining therapeutic presence and alliance. Participants will leave with a clearer map for sequencing interventions--stabilization, processing, and integration--and a set of concrete techniques to support stability, deepen connection, and create conditions for durable, meaningful change.

At the completion of this session, the participant should be able to:

1. Describe core principles of an integrative, beyond-one-model framework for trauma treatment that incorporate parts-informed, polyvagal, somatic, and attachment-focused strategies.
2. Differentiate common trauma-related nervous system states (e.g., hyperarousal, hypoarousal, dissociation) and identify observable in-session markers of state shifts.
3. Apply a decision-making process to select and sequence interventions that match a client’s moment-to-moment capacity, clinical needs, and treatment phase (stabilization, processing, integration).
4. Demonstrate at least three techniques for responding to extreme reactions in ways that support stability, relational connection, and therapeutic attunement.
5. Identify strategies for strengthening the therapeutic alliance while working with complex trauma dynamics, including rapid shifts in affect, reactivity, and shutdown.

Come Closer: Childhood Wounds, Adult Love, and the Secrets of Intimacy

Galit Atlas, Ph.D.

10:15 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

(1.25 CE credits)

Synopsis: In this groundbreaking work, renowned psychoanalyst Dr. Galit Atlas provides an honest and nuanced understanding of how our childhood wounds shape our adult intimate relationships and how our earliest attachments form the love we develop later in life. Atlas explores six distinct prototypes of childhood wounds—the frightened child, who is ambivalent about closeness; the melancholic child, who is anxious about separations and transitions; the ashamed child, who believes something is wrong with who she is; the invisible child, who learned to hide; the guilty child, who worries about hurting the people she loves; and the chosen child, who feels responsible for others' emotional well-being. By identifying these wounds within ourselves, we gain the ability to break old patterns, make different choices, and become known to ourselves and to others.

At the conclusion of this session, the participant should be able to:

1. Identify and describe the six prototypes of childhood wounds and their defining characteristics.
2. Explain how early childhood attachments influence patterns in adult intimate relationships.
3. Apply strategies for recognizing childhood wounds and developing healthier relational patterns.

Embodied Spirituality – An Exploration in Personal Transformation

Shi Heng Yi

11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

(1 CE credit)

Synopsis: The ancient Shaolin tradition views pain, resistance, and inner conflict not as disruption, but as valuable raw material for personal transformation. We now want to explore the central question of how this wisdom can not only be understood but also integrated into everyday life. Master Shi Heng Yi aims to demonstrate to the audience how body and mind can enter a dialogue and become one. Through the combination of movement, breath, and inner stillness, we enter a state of being fully present in the current moment.

At the conclusion of this session, the participant should be able to:

1. Understand how to integrate mind-body awareness into everyday life, including posture, movement, decision-making and relationships.
2. Develop tools to regulate stress and calm the nervous system.
3. Cultivate a state of present-moment awareness to support emotional balance and clarity.
4. Apply simple, practical exercises that create clarity, focus, and inner strength in their therapeutic practice.

Self, Soul & Spirituality in Healing Trauma

Frank Anderson, M.D.

11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

(1 CE credit)

Synopsis: Trauma can disrupt a person's sense of wholeness--shaping the nervous system around threat, straining relationships, and leaving people feeling disconnected from meaning, vitality, or inner steadiness. In this one-hour session, Frank Anderson, M.D., offers a grounded, integrative lens on meaning, energy, and repair in trauma healing—how these dimensions show up clinically, why they matter, and how to work with them in ways that are practical and respectful of each client's beliefs and language.

Dr. Anderson will introduce a simple clinical map for orienting the work (stabilization and boundaries, mindful contact with protective strategies, witnessing what happened, and supporting repair and reconnection), then share a small set of brief interventions that can be used in session or offered as between session practices. These may include attention to breath and body cues, imagery, sound, and gentle “reset” practices aimed at supporting regulation and helping stuck energy begin to move—without making spirituality or meaning-making a requirement.

The session will also address common clinical questions: how to invite conversations about spirituality without imposing a frame, how to track “self-energy” (e.g., calm, clarity, compassion) as a therapeutic signal rather than a doctrine, and how to approach themes like forgiveness and repair in a way that is paced, grounded, and clinically appropriate.

At the completion of this session, the participant should be able to:

1. Describe an integrative, trauma-informed approach to working with meaning, energy, and repair in clinical trauma care.
2. Identify at least three brief interventions (e.g., breath, body-based attention, imagery, or sound) that may support regulation and repair-oriented work with trauma survivors.
3. Apply client-centered guidelines for exploring spirituality and meaning-making in ways that are ethically appropriate, culturally responsive, and aligned with the client's language and beliefs.

Emotional Inheritance, Trauma & the Clinical Process

Galit Atlas, Ph.D.

11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

(1 CE credit)

Synopsis: This interactive workshop will explore Dr. Atlas's work on Emotional Inheritance and introduce a psychoanalytic framework and tools to help therapists listen to and work with patients' intergenerational cycles of trauma and pain. It will offer new ways to unpack the ghosts of the unsaid and the unspeakable, family collusions and secrets, inherited trauma, survivor guilt, and more.

At the completion of this session, the participant should be able to:

1. Describe the concept of emotional inheritance.

2. Analyze how unspoken family dynamics—such as secrets, collusions, and unspeakable experiences—shape clients’ emotional and relational patterns.
3. Apply psychoanalytic listening skills and therapeutic tools to help clients explore and work through inherited trauma and intergenerational pain.

Role of Adverse Childhood Experiences in the Assessment & Treatment of Eating Disorders

Tim Brewerton, M.D.

11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

(1 CE credit)

Synopsis: Eating disorders (EDs) are linked to adverse childhood experiences, especially child maltreatment, as well as other traumas and trauma-related disorders, including PTSD, complex PTSD, the dissociative subtype of PTSD, and dissociative disorders, all of which are associated with higher severity of illness, comorbidity and chronicity. Integrated treatment strategies that go beyond sequential approaches are required to adequately address the complexity of ED presentations. Although there are several published practice guidelines for the treatment of eating disorders, and likewise, there are several published practice guidelines for the treatment of PTSD, none of them specifically address ED+PTSD comorbidity. The result is a lack of integration between ED and PTSD treatment providers and programs, which often leads to fragmented, incomplete, uncoordinated and ineffective care of severely ill patients with ED+PTSD. This presentation will also provide an overview of the emerging concept of ultra-processed food addiction and its relationship to eating disorders and trauma-related disorders.

At the conclusion of this session, the participant should be able to:

1. Name three comorbid DSM-5-TR diagnoses associated with eating disorders and PTSD.
2. Explain the importance of integrated treatment strategies in the treatment of individuals with eating disorders and PTSD.
3. Describe three mechanisms whereby adverse childhood experiences and other traumas result in eating disorders and other comorbidity.

The Diamond Approach: Clarity, Courage, and the Power of What’s Possible

Elliott Connie, M.A., LPC

1 p.m. to 2:45 p.m.

(1.25 CE credits)

Synopsis: This session invites participants into the spirit of the Diamond Approach within Solution-Focused Brief Therapy, not as a set of techniques, but as a way of seeing, listening, and responding with intention.

Through story, reflection, and real-world examples, the presentation explores how clarity emerges when we stay anchored in what people want rather than what is wrong, and how meaningful change unfolds when we trust the wisdom already present in those we serve. The Diamond Approach offers a simple yet powerful structure for navigating complexity, uncertainty, and

emotionally charged moments while keeping conversations grounded in hope, agency, and forward movement.

Designed for a mixed audience of clinicians, leaders, and helping professionals, this talk reconnects participants with the purpose behind their work: creating space for people to rediscover their strengths, articulate their vision, and take the next meaningful step toward the life they want.

Participants will leave feeling inspired, grounded, and reminded that small, intentional shifts in conversation can open the door to extraordinary change.

At the completion of this session, the participant should be able to:

1. Describe the core principles of the Diamond Approach within Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT).
2. Identify how focusing on desired outcomes rather than problems promotes clarity and progress.
3. Recognize the role of client strengths and existing wisdom in facilitating change.
4. Apply the Diamond Approach to navigate emotionally complex or uncertain conversations.
5. Identify at least one practical conversational shift they can use in their professional practice.

Losing a Loved One to Suicide: An Interview, Conversation, and Message of Hope and Healing
Tessa Spencer and J. Matthew Dorman, LPC, CPM

3 p.m. to 4 p.m.

(1 CE credit)

Synopsis: Tessa Spencer, local television anchor, veteran of the first Gulf War and Emmy Award nominee, shares the powerful story of her 24-year-old gifted and creative son who died by suicide. She will share the unique aspects of suicide loss; the emotional, physical and psychological impacts on parents. Moderator Matt Dorman will facilitate an open, upfront and interactive discussion to provide insight into the nonlinear, individualized stages of grief and how they may present specifically in parents after suicide loss. Resources about ways to support a grieving parent will be included.

At the completion of this session, the participant should be able to:

1. Verbalize awareness and understanding of the impact grief and mourning has on a parent who lost a loved one to suicide.
2. Recognize how the stages of grief and mourning influence the parent and those around the parent.
3. List resources for loved ones and themselves.