



Child Psychotherapist as Parent-Infant Psychotherapist

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Child Psychotherapy Training

Two parts:

- Pre-Clinical: MSc Psychoanalytic Observation and Reflective Practice (2 years)
- Clinical Training: Professional Doctorate in Child and Adolescent Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy (4 years)

Pre-Clinical Training

- Infant Observation (2yrs)
- Young Child Observation (1yr)
- Child Development and Neuroscience research
- Psychoanalytic Theory
- Personality Development
- Work Discussion



Infant Observation Birth to 2 years

- Naturalistic observation in the home, of normal development and mother-infant relationship
- Once weekly, one-hour observations made without note taking
- Process recording written after observation: close attention to detail and sequence
- Weekly Infant Observation Seminar - observations discussed in depth; hear about and get to know 4 other babies in depth



Purpose of observation

- Learning about all aspects of the everyday emotional life and experience of a baby as they develop, from baby's point of view (baby as 'centre of consciousness')
- Observation and experience of the development of the relationship between baby and mother
- Particular focus on emotional atmosphere and dynamics
- Attention to feelings elicited in observer as key source of information (counter-transference)
- Developing benign observational stance and receptive capacity
- Development of capacity for reflection without action
- Gives meaning to the more didactic and theoretical elements of the course so **learning from emotional experience** which is at the core of the child psychotherapy tradition.



Young Child Observation

- Toddler between 2 and 4 years old
- Observed at home or in nursery



Theoretical elements of pre-clinical training

- Psychoanalytic Theory & Research
- Infant Observation Research
- Child Development Research
- Neuroscience Research
- Attachment Theory & Research
- Personality Development



Key features of pre-clinical training

- Observation
- Focus on the here and now
- Emotional and non-verbal dimension of experience and functioning
- Unconscious processes (pre-verbal development & functioning as foundation of later stages of development)
- Use of countertransference as source of information



Parent-Infant Psychotherapy

- A treatment that is targeted at the relationship, not at infant or parent
- Aimed at improving the quality of the parent-infant relationship
- Supports the development of attachment
- Promotes parental attunement



Aspects of Psychoanalytic Parent-Infant Psychotherapy

- PIP can be short or long term work: not determined by severity/complexity of the case
- Engagement and the development of a treatment alliance
- Ghosts in the nursery
- Getting to know the real baby
- Engaging the observing and reflective parts of the parent to see the baby in front of them, not the baby in their mind
- Emotional truthfulness
- 2 people put their minds together and see what they see



Considerations

- Importance of the temperament / personality of the baby
- Where the therapy is offered
- Adjustments and adaptations to parents functioning
- Working with parents with complex mental health difficulties



Psychoanalytic Parent-Infant Psychotherapy

- Observation
- Attention to detail
- Speaking for the infant
- Engagement
- Containment
- Attunement



Concluding thoughts

- A plea for a further roll-out of the MSc Psychoanalytic Observation and Reflective Practice course, building on the 10 NES funded places this year (part of NES Infant Mental Health Training Suite) → need for specialist core skills for infant mental health work
- A thanks to Dilys Daws



reading

- Closely observed infants 1989 Karnac Books
Editor **Lisa Miller**
- Developments In infant observation The
Tavistock Model 1997 Routledge Editor **Susan
Reid**
- What the Matter be? Therapeutic Interventions
with Parents, Infants and Young Children 2008
Karnac Editors **Louise Emanuel, Elizabeth
Bradley**
- The Baby as subject Clinical Studies in Infant-
Parent Therapy 2014 Karnac Editors **Campbell
Paul , Frances Thomson-Salo**
- Nurturing Natures 2011 Psychology
Press **Graham Music**
- Parent-Infant Psychotherapy for Sleep Problems
2020 Routledge **Dilys Daws Sarah Sutton**
- The selected writings of Selma Fraiberg
1987 Ohio State University Press **Selma Fraiberg**

