

Care Index . Parent Infant attachment
May 2018 – July 2018, London UK

I would like to firstly thank the FPSA for their generous funding to complete the course. The course was a 9 -day programme, Led by Rebecca Carr-Hopkins. The CARE-Index (Crittenden 2005, 2007) is an assessment of the developing relationship between a 'parent' and child. It uses a videotaped 3-5-minute free play observation in which the adult is asked 'to play with your child as you would normally'. The infant CARE-Index is unique in its ability to measure the beginnings of attachment behaviour from birth until 15 months.

The CARE-Index can provide information about parents' sensitivity and responsiveness to children's signals and children's strategies for coping with parents' behaviour. Parental sensitivity is assessed by the extent to which the parent (or parent figure) does things that please the child, or rather looks to control the child (because the child does not please them) or is unresponsive (and so is failing to connect with the child). The child's strategies can include being cooperative, protesting what they don't like, passive acceptance, and compulsive behaviour (where the child inhibits their own signals of need to fit in with parental expectations). The different patterns of insensitive parental care, and the child strategies that result from them, each carry a different sort of threat to the child's development. Using the manualized system, which analyses discrete areas such as facial expression, voice, and turn-taking, ratings can be given of children's attachment strategies and of the degree of risk to the child's future development.

I have found the training absolutely invaluable and Rebecca drew on her wealth of knowledge not only to demonstrate the model but really bring it to light in a warm and productive learning environment. I feel as though it provided a unique way in which to understand and assess the parent infant relationship. In fact, for many of us on the course it felt as though our eyes were being opened for the first time in relation to really understanding parent infant attachment as a dyadic construct.

For me this learning has been key; I work in a Clinical service within a Children's Social Care Safeguarding Team , our work is diverse and includes the assessment and intervention of families at risk and this includes adolescent mother's who themselves have had adverse traumatic histories and have developed subsequent attachment difficulties and are referred to the clinic due to the high risk behaviors they display in relation to their parenting. We are often required to provide specialist assessment in relation to the parent infant attachment and recommend and or provide appropriate treatment interventions. The course has really provided me with an extended knowledge base to help me think differently about my work and provided a clinical tool that is designed specifically to help think more comprehensively about at -risk relationships, such as cases where children display a falsely positive presentation in order to comply with the demands of maltreating parents or prop up the functioning of a depressed or withdrawn carer, Identify patterns of behaviour in parents and children that either indicate risk or concern, or promote positive development and offer clear opportunities for primary prevention and early intervention.

I am already making plans to share some of the learning within the team and will be encouraging other team members to access this course as I think it is invaluable to be able to understand risk in a dyadic construct and this highly relevant for our clinical work that is offered within a safeguarding context.

Many thanks again to the FPSA
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