

MSc in Systemic Psychotherapy; fourth year

I am very grateful to the FPSA, in granting me financial support which has enabled me to undertake the final year of my Systemic Family Psychotherapy training at the Tavistock and Portman NHS foundation Trust. Hopefully, on receipt of my results later this month I will be a qualified Systemic Psychotherapist.

I have just finished the research element of the course. This involved interviewing systemic psychotherapists regarding their experiences of working in the non-clinical spaces of individuals' lives (such as school and homes) rather than the traditional clinic setting. This has been a rewarding yet challenging experience, which I hope will offer some insight on a subject has not previously been considered by researchers. The research highlighted the importance of thinking about how power and safety is effected; and the richness and distractions that can be created through delivering therapy in these non-traditional environments. The research emphasized the need for further consideration of this topic, for families, therapists, organisations and policy makers alike.

I have also greatly enjoyed working with families at the Tavistock and Portman CAMHS service as part of my live supervision family therapy team. In this placement we work using a team and screen approach. Young people referred to the clinic present with difficulties including eating disorders, self-harm, Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), low mood and depression. I recently presented my work to a panel for the Viva module and was overwhelmed when I achieved a distinction for my work.

This year I have worked with two families as the lead therapists for 20 hours as well as participating in the live supervision and reflecting team for 150 hours. To give examples, I have worked directly with a young person who presented with high levels of anxiety and with suicidal ideation and symptoms of Autism. The family struggled to understand or accept the possibility of autism when it was initially discussed with them by the school, but in the course of our work together they agreed for an assessment to go ahead, and became more accepting of the possibility of this in the light of their daughters exceptional talents and uniqueness. I have learned to work as part of a team using systemic techniques, as well as gaining and providing supervision and feedback on how to improve practice.

My skill and confidence in working with adolescents and their families has increased greatly. I am able to maintain a curious and tentative frame while creating a balanced therapeutic alliance with all family members. I come prepared with a range of ideas and hypotheses to each session, but at the same time work dialogically with what the family bring in that moment. I have gained skills in interviewing techniques such as using circular, relational and reflexive questions and tracking patterns within families. I have also developed skills in specific methods such as narrative therapy and have been able to hold a both/and position between the medical and social constructionist models. This enables me to work ethically and affectively with a range of professionals from different disciplines.

I am able to make links with theory and practice. I have also designed and delivered a training programme that I ran on a systemic approach called Tree of Life Technique for a team within a school.

I have been able to transfer new techniques and learning to my team and provide systemic consultation to families and professionals as well as direct intervention with adolescents and families.

I would like the opportunity to again thank the FPSA. If I had not had this support I may not have been able to complete my training. I cannot emphasize how much I feel this has, and will continue to benefit my knowledge, skills and practice in the work that I continue to do with adolescents and their families.