

## The Tavistock and Portman Clinic

### Child, Adolescent and Emotional Well Being. Interdisciplinary Practice. (D24)

I undertook this one year course at The Tavistock clinic. I was fortunate enough to be granted part funding for the course. My personal aim of undertaking the course was so that I would have the foundations for progressing onto the M34, which eventually allows you to become accredited as a psychodynamic psychotherapist.

The day was full with interesting and varied modules. These ranged from infant observation, family observation, work discussion, experiential groups and the more academic lectures child development and research, with presenting issues. The course was an interesting mix of psychoanalytic and systemic approaches. It is a good way of determining what approach might suit you best.

Students decide which type of observations they would prefer, a young child, family or infant observations. From a 30 week course, the placement should ideally be 20 weeks of observations. There is a paper required at the end of this period. As you might expect from the Tavistock there is case presentation and discussion for each student.

All students had to take part in the experiential group and as you can imagine lots of time was taken up with what the group was about, how safe it was, whether it was therapy or not. The group I was involved in was led by a systemic therapist which was a different experience for me as I prefer the more psychodynamic approach. However it was a refreshing approach and one that I could relate to. Occasionally we would have an activity and this was useful, but most of the time the group was led by its members and was very well contained. There was no set agenda and although we did discuss parts of the course there were also occasions when people brought in issues from their personal and work life.

Clinical work is crucial as for work discussion there is a presentation of a case each week. This meant presenting your work every 5-6 weeks approximately. However this time was also useful as the initial part of the time was spent discussing any pressing clinical and practice issues arising from the work place or from placements. Personally I found the work discussion groups very useful. It provided another layer of clinical supervision both from a psychoanalytic and systemic viewpoint. Whilst my seminar leader was a psychotherapist she was also a family systemic therapist so was able to offer differing viewpoints.

Every student has a personal tutor and this can focus on work issues or personal issues impacting on the ability to apply yourself to the course content. It is a demanding course both in terms of academic requirements but also on an emotional level. However these issues can be discussed with your tutor, which is helpful.

For those thinking of entering clinical work with young people both child development and presenting issues give a comprehensive overview of up to date research and issues including emotional, social, cultural, biological, neuro developmental. For those already working in the clinical area it is a very good revision of clinical issues and presentations.

I found the issues around early child development and attachment crucial to my work. The timetable was well thought out and there were guest speakers who are specialists in their field. This made for lively debate and discussion. The reading list was vast and there are some good all round books and articles that I am sure I will continue to use alongside my practise for years to come! The main one being '*Nurturing Natures*' by the unit leader Graham Music. This is a great book if you're interested in early development but also covers the adolescent period, traumatic experience and resilience.

Another part of the course which was useful and interesting is the Inter group conference which takes place during the Easter break. This highlights the unconscious at work and recreates a quasi-organisation that you somehow are part of. It raises student's anxiety levels but is able to help you realise what part you play within a work group and indeed your role at work. For those new to this type of group processing it was anxiety provoking and quite frightening. I had had previous experience of this type of experience and tended to go with the flow. However it was experiential and brought out different emotions in people that were quite unexpected and enlightening. There was also quite a lot of laughing involved, albeit of a nervous nature! But some of it was fun. It was also a good insight into how children and families might feel entering different systems and the expectations required of them. There was an attendance certificate for this and was part of completing the course.

Personal therapy is not required at this stage of the course but is mandatory for the next part, M34. Some students towards the end of the course had started already. For those who preferred the systemic route, the D4 is the next pathway recommended.

I would recommend this course, particularly for those starting out on the clinical route with children and families. It is quite demanding of time and does require clinical placements but if already working clinically can be incorporated into your work place. Some students have gone straight onto M34 whilst others have intermitted for a year. Some are trying out different experiences, taking time out of study and some are embarking on personal therapy.

I have decided to intermit for a year as I have a new job and want to commit to this before embarking on a substantial training. I am also considering personal therapy in preparation for the next part. I am extremely grateful to have been part funded for this course and as most courses are now expensive would probably not have had the opportunity to undertake it without FSA help. Many thanks

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