

Training course:

I recently completed the University of Exeter MSc in Psychological Therapies, Systemic Strand which is a recognised qualifying course by AFT (association of family therapy). This course ran from October 2021 to July 2023 and required me to complete in excess of 300 clinical training and parallel hours.

Date completed:

Confirmation of successful completion received on 08/09/2023. Passed with Merit.

Qualifications:

Person centred counsellor and systemic psychotherapist.

I currently work in a locality CAMHS team supporting young people and their families where children are suffering from severe, complex and enduring mental health presentations. I also offer a small amount of training, supervision and therapy in private practice.

Summary of the training:

The course was a mixture of taught seminars, discussion groups, presentations and reflective spaces. As well as a clinical placement in which we could hone and develop our work with families. We learned to develop and articulate systemic hypotheses, to spontaneously generate relational questions allowing families to reflect on and better understand their interactions. We developed an in-depth knowledge of different schools of systemic practice, and through peer-lead presentations shared our particular areas of interest with one another. Some areas of systemic practice involve sharing good psycho-educational information with families, which we learned how to do in a collegiate and collaborative way. We learned how to effectively utilise supervision and the unique way of working with a therapeutic team, which is a distinct feature of systemic therapy. We developed ways in which to understand complex presentations not just through the person's individual psycho-archaeology, but through how their interactions and relationships with others shape their experiences.

Experience of training:

Part of the course involved a research project, which for me was an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis of the experience of parents with adopted children who have received a specific type of systemic therapy called Non-violent Resistance. I have practiced, supervised and trained others in Non-violent Resistance for 10 years and the ability to do an in-depth study into how this approach is experienced by a specific population was eye opening and reassuring. This research has applications for anyone using this approach with parents of adopted children or any other family and can also inform how we train professionals to work with these populations. My aim is to publish the research in an academic journal.

My own journey through the training was one of how to integrate aspects of my former training, as a person-centred counsellor with the different ideas that come from the systemic therapy field. On starting my MSc training, I was invited to "let go of all that counselling stuff". Having just qualified, my final feedback still hints at the same suggestion. It seems "letting go" of a therapeutic position I believe in and have worked from for the last 15 years is easier said than done. Consequently, I've wrestled with what it means to be a systemic therapist, even questioning whether family therapy is for me. However, I've come to realise the two disciplines are not as far apart as we might assume. I feel person-centred ideas are alive and well within systemic thinking, and perhaps are so integrated that we have forgotten where they came from. By exploring

systemic ideas and keeping in mind how these fit with a person-centred perspective has offered me a direction in therapy I have not previously known how to travel, giving me some new direction and ideas and dare I say adding to both traditionally systemic and person-centred ideas. Both person-centred and systemic philosophies are arguably more important than technique. Holding a highest context marker of maintaining a respectful and curious position to our clients, is prevalent in both approaches and for me the most important part of any therapy.