

Certificate In Integrative Embodied Psychotherapy October 2023 – September 2024

As a social worker and Child Psychotherapist I currently work in a post placement team supporting adopted and Special Guardianship Children and their families. Since qualifying as a Psychotherapist in 2009 my practice has continued to evolve, and I have completed additional training in a range of relational and trauma informed therapies

My increased understanding of research relating to trauma, neuro-science, the neuro-sequential model of therapeutics and theories relating to poly vagal theory have shaped my own learning and inspired me to develop further training in therapies that integrate more embodied mind body approaches. In particular making decisions regarding further training has been informed by trauma specialists including Dr. Bessel Van De Kolk and Peter Levine who indicate the importance of including somatic practices in trauma therapies. My interest in this area was further reinforced after completing yoga therapy training and how integrating this into my psychotherapy practice showed positive outcomes in promoting a mind body approach in sessions.

The Integrative Embodied Psychotherapy course seemed a good match to compliment my skills in this area and the funding by the FPSA enabled me to commit to the year training. The certificate year course is a post qualification course for registered psychotherapists, counsellors and psychologists. The course learning integrated a wide range of range of techniques from the practices of body-oriented psychotherapy, dance movement psychotherapy, somatic experiencing, somatic trauma therapy, neuroscience, creative arts therapies, transpersonal psychotherapy and mindfulness. The course also included learning somatic practices within the Internal Family Systems mode, which provides a road map and transformative approach in healing from trauma.

The course was facilitated by highly skilled psychotherapists with years of experience. Just some of the learning included developing strategies such as grounding and stabilisation to promote self-regulation, helping clients to safely come into sensation and to find a “safe place in the body” and learning tools to help transform difficulties sensations in their bodies such as anxiety and physical pain. This stage of the therapy is a crucial aspect of the work as building resources and feeling safe is a necessary requirement before helping a client to process and release trauma and survival energy that is understood to be stored in the body.

The training included experiential workshops which integrated somatic embodiment practices and immersing myself in these workshops benefited me in a way that I have not experienced in previous training. This enabled me to become a more embodied person and therapist. Overall, I believe I have increased my range of skills in safely supporting clients who have difficulties that are rooted in complex trauma.

During the course I was required to attend 5 weeks modules, attend 5 mentoring sessions, and the assessment included a live observation during the last module. After completing the modules, I was required to submit an essay to demonstrate reflection of my own embodied practice and areas of development, and how I had integrated this learning with my clients.

Many of the children I have worked with have a compromised nervous system which impacts on their day-to-day functioning and many struggle to engage with therapies that are predominantly talking based. Whilst my previous training as a Psychotherapist continues to provide me a solid foundation in my work with children and families, I am confident that integrating a more embodied mind body approach offers an alternative way of working for children and particularly for many of

the children in our services who have not responded to more conventional talking based treatments.

As therapy for children is funded by the Adoption Support Fund there is a requirement that therapists have robust reviews in place which include measuring outcomes. Feedback and outcome measures have shown that the young people I have worked with have responded positively and there are clear indications that this approach can help bring about positive change. Additionally, the theoretical understanding and learning around trauma being stored in the body and theory relating to poly vagal theory has enabled me to offer psycho-education to parents so that they also have a better understanding of trauma and also how they can develop simple practices in day to day life that can help support young people to recover and thrive. I have also found this learning to be helpful to the rest of the team, because as a consultant to other workers I am able to offer advice with regard to developing therapeutic plans that may need to include a mind body approach.

With regards to future development in this area of work I am hoping to develop a group programme so that more young people can benefit from workshops that can be supportive and resourceful. I have also made the decision to continue to fund ongoing mentoring sessions and I have already committed to attend live workshops so that I can continue to increase my skills as an embodied psychotherapist.

I was so delighted to gain my certification as an embodied psychotherapist and feel incredible grateful to the FPSA foundation for enabling me to complete this training. It really has been transformative in terms of my own practice, and I feel very confident that this intervention will positively impact the children, young people and families I support. Overall, this approach has given me more hope that with the right environment and support child and young people can recover from trauma. Thank you so much for this opportunity.