

Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) Level One - Kim Golding at AdoptionPlus Milton Keynes, Jan'22-25th 2018 (four day course).

I am currently working in a Local Authority setting on a new initiative of therapeutic wrap-around systemic support for Looked After Children where there is risk of multiple placement moves. DDP fits in beautifully to this work because I am working with traumatised young people who often have a deep mistrust of relationships and reject anyone who attempts to get close to them. The DDP way of being 'open and engaged' is an essential in getting past these defences both with the young person but also in tuning in to the needs of carers and teachers who are often struggling themselves to maintain empathy where and when it's needed most...as they say 'those who need the most love often ask for it in the most unloving of ways'!

I found this training course to be a real 'game changer'. It challenged me to move beyond helping that seeks to problem solve, educate or provide reassurances; helping that ultimately make me feel better as a practitioner but may leave the client feeling their depth of feelings are not valid, or too scary for an other to experience, hear or feel. I gained a new understanding of how we can unlock the power of feeling heard; by sitting with the painful experiences these young people and their carers have, and being an ally in figuring out together what they mean and where to go from here. It's scary stuff though...it means much more naming feelings and frustrations, so there's less places to hide, and it's definitely not the natural stomping ground for a Yorkshire lass!

It's going to take a life time to practice this I'm sure, as it's less a set of principals and more a way of being with folks. It's an amazing approach that will be SO useful in working with this often chaotic group of young people who can tumble from foster carer to foster family gathering additional losses and hurt on the way. In this current climate it is a real privilege to be part of a Local Authority based initiative to increase placement stability through a substantial in-house therapeutic offer; workshops, network meeting, reflective supervision, carer consults and carer-child therapeutic sessions. This training will impact my delivery in all of these areas, to social workers, carers, teachers, T.A.s, as well as directly to the young people and children involved. The course helped me re focus on the carers as the main agents of change. The main therapeutic work is less likely to happen in the hour a week they spend with me, and more likely to be happening in the one hundred and sixty seven other hours that they spend doing ordinary things in their week with significant others who can massively effect whether they feel safe and understood, or not. If I can model to carers how to use these everyday experiences to work through the trust issues and the hurt of the past, then they can start to practice and embed these skills too. I remembered how important it is to work with those key people around the child who will be the ones to re-parent them through all of those daily interactions, to re-write relationships where young people can learn to trust.

The course recapped attachment theory with the see-saw analogy and how our own attachment history impacts how we parent. We looked at polyvagal theory and brain development, covered the principals of P.A.C.E. the shield of shame, two hands of parenting, and practiced intersubjectivity, speaking for/to/about, and matching affect via the dreaded, but very useful role play. This practical application of the skills we were learning as we went was as scary as it sounds, but thanks to supportive participants and great facilitation, it was the highlight of the course for me. I also enjoyed the wealth of experience Kim brought with her own examples of practice and her ability to share enough of her own vulnerabilities to encourage us rookies to 'get out there' on our wobbly legs!

Working as a therapist there's so much pressure to have a magic wand and be the expert, and not enough space to not know and embrace the wonderings, curiosity and enjoyment of being with people with all their muck and complexities; *"In a time so filled with methods and techniques designed to change people, to influence their behaviour, and to make them do new things and think new thoughts, we have lost the simple but difficult gift of being present to each other"* (Henri J M Nouwen Donald PMcNeill Douglas A Morrison). This course helped me reconnect with the importance of 'being with' the other person. Thank you again for providing me with this huge learning opportunity.

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