

NVR Advanced Level – November 2016

I attended the two practice days and advanced level NVR course in London, having done the foundation level a year earlier. The advanced course focused more on the needs of parents and child, multi-stressed families, and the larger system.

The two practice days came first. It was helpful for me having had a gap between the foundation course, giving me a chance to use the ideas in my practice, and then return to the course to reflect on this and learn from others. Some people on the course had done the foundation level just a month prior, and felt that they had not had the chance to use the ideas in order to get most of the practice days. I would agree with this, and would even say that the two practice days should come at the end of the advanced level, as I would have appreciated the chance to reflect on the more complex learning from this stage of the course. Having said this some of the small group discussions were really helpful to learn from creative ideas others have used i.e. how other parents have overcome barriers to recruiting supporters. I also liked the idea of parents writing self-announcements and reflected on the power of writing a self-announcement for me in my agency context.

The advanced level 4 days explored ideas around the larger system, the concept of “erasure” when parents have experienced trauma and who are the “safe” people that parents can ask to support them. This included identifying who are “critical prescriptive others” and how they may become safe supportive others using ideas such as compassionate witnessing and appreciative witnessing. There was also a focus on trauma states of consciousness and functional states of consciousness which was really helpful. We practised interviewing to generate the Caring Dialogue and to bring out the Heroic Narrative. Some of these ideas were complex and although we had time to practice in small groups, there was not enough chance to reflect and internalise the learning whilst on the course. I have needed to revisit much of this on my own.

There were some interesting discussions about the concept of “shame” and Peter Jakob introduced how NVR conceptualises shame as a social, cultural concept and as something that children can learn to regulate as a developmental task rather than the notion that “shame is always bad”. We looked at the unmet needs of the child and that trauma theory is important but NVR also looks beyond this.

I feel much more confident as a practitioner using NVR, having done the advanced course and thank FPSA for supporting my attendance. We are receiving an increasing number of referrals in our service where children are displaying violent or controlling behaviour and parents and professionals are feeling powerless and hopeless. NVR feels empowering for parents and for me as a practitioner.

Fawzia Kauser

Family and Systemic Psychotherapist