

Infant Observation Course

Infant Observation is designed to enhance professional and therapeutic work with children, young people, their carers and adults. The course is rooted in the learning experienced derived from detailed observation using a psychoanalytic framework and its contribution to an understanding of the unconscious processes taking place within all relationships.

The practice of Infant Observation according to the **Tavistock Model** is a specific modality which uses naturalistic observation of an infant in its family setting to help developing a “psychoanalytic attitude” through a direct experience. This represents a basis for further clinical work in parent/infant psychotherapy and psychoanalytic practice, either with children or adults. Infant Observation was initially developed by Esther Bick in 1948 at the Tavistock Clinic in London and it has been established as a core element of training psychotherapy students. Its usefulness to clinical work is well established worldwide, as it enables clinicians to conceptualise the nonverbal and implicit interactive processes, can prepare psychotherapy trainees and enhance clinicians' capacity for perceptual and emotional receptivity. Other professionals can benefit from this course for their own understanding and growth (see below).

Dates

The seminar group will run once a month on Thursday from 7:30 to 9 P.M. for a total of 10 classes between August 2022 to July 2023.

Venue

The Seminar Group meetings will be running remotely via Zoom; in case group participants are all from Auckland, a in person attendance can be organised.

Requirements

Before starting the infant observation course, participants are invited to find a family that will allow them to observe an infant from birth for a year period. A preliminary meeting can be organised prior to start the course; please contact the course organiser for further information.

Fee

The course Fee is 650NZ\$ for each participant; concession fee is offered if one is attending other NZIPP courses during the same year. A minimum of 3 participants is needed to start the course.

Approach

The **infant observation** course is based on the experience of each participant observing an infant within the relationship with his/her primary caregiver at home for an hour a week, starting from birth and during the baby's first year of life. Observers are asked to take up a stance of attentiveness, in depth observation with a sensitive and warmth attitude, by maintaining a *good enough* distance to be able to take in whatever is happening during the hour, without any judgement, interpretation or interfering with the interaction. Observers intervene as little as possible, while recognising that their presence has effects on the family. During the observation, the observer is requested to observe without taking any notes. Notes are written following the observation including fine detailed descriptions kept distinct from making theoretical and other inferences.

The **seminar group** will meet once a month to discuss the observations notes presented by each participant, whereby the experience of observing forms the basis for learning about early development and relationships within a psychoanalytical framework. The group discussion is facilitated by a psychoanalytic psychotherapist/psychoanalyst. This allows the group members to learn from each other, enabling observers to go beyond their single viewpoint and reveal and learn from transferences that are inevitably produced as a result of powerful identifications. The emotional significance of the observation experience provides a central vehicle for learning about babies' early self-development and the group helps containing these aspects. The seminar helps the observer learn to process the inclination for judgmental and blaming thoughts which arise particularly when anxiety is stirred. Along with developing sensitivity and precision in observation, the course teaches how to think freshly and inductively from observation, including trying to understand how the developing infant is making sense of the world. Often, the observer's containing presence can have a positive effect on mothers, enabling them to think for themselves about their babies, and to respond to their baby from that empathic place.

Aim of the course is to develop an attitude of observing the specific dynamics and the affective atmosphere of the interaction between a mother and a baby. Observers can develop 'empathic receptivity', as they unconsciously engage with primitive states of mind, when following the infant's emotional development within his/her family. This forms the basis of the open attitude and not-knowing stance to work with children, families and adults within a psychoanalytical setting.

Due to the characteristic of this experience, the observer has the privilege to observe mother and baby living through and resolving routine and difficult situations in their own ways. This will lead to the development of a more comprehensive understanding of human development informed by a psychoanalytic approach and child development research.

The readings for the course will cover the following **components**:

- Infant Observation;
- Psychoanalytic Theory;
- Child Development Research.

This course can be **suitable for different professions**:

- Teachers and Teaching assistants at Schools, Preschools, Early Childhood Education Centres;
- Nurses, Medical Doctors, Healthcare Assistants;
- Psychologists, Psychotherapists, Counsellors, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Professionals, Family Support Workers;
- Adult Mental Health Care Professionals and Allied Professionals;
- Social workers;
- Lawyers and other Professionals working in the Family Court, Youth Justice System and Community Youth Workers.

For further information and inquiries please contact:

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