



network
creating connections for
developing relationships

DDP Conference Proceedings 2014, Walsall, Birmingham, England 10-11 Nov 2014

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Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP)

International Conference, Walsall, Birmingham, England
10th - 11th November 2014

Conference Handout

Dan Hughes
Reflections on the conference

With many thanks to Dan Hughes for giving permission for this to be reproduced on the website.

About DDP Network

DDP Network is a worldwide body that promotes DDP and supports professionals, parents and caregivers in finding out about the therapy and the parenting approach. We provide information about the therapy, how to become certified in DDP, the parenting approach, resources, training courses and conferences.

Reflections on the DDP UK Conference

Walsall, Birmingham

10th – 11th November 2014

Written by Dan Hughes

It was a pleasure and honor to present at the International DDP Conference in Birmingham, 10-11 November 2014, along with the many other excellent speakers. Those in attendance also contributed greatly to the success of the conference with their engaged presence, insightful comments and questions, and overall enthusiasm for our work.

As I mentioned in my talk, I was inspired as much by what I saw and learned on 10 November as I was by Jon Baylin's clear and insightful descriptions of his knowledge about the structure and functioning of the human brain.

The meaning of intersubjective experience and learning became more clear to me than it has ever been before. At times, I have become too focused on the lovely moments of comfort and joy that are experienced and expressed by the children and their parents in my office. I do not want to minimize the importance of these experiences in helping mistrustful children to begin to trust their parents and carers. Nor the importance for adopters and carers of providing comfort and experiencing reciprocal joy with their children that often enables them to continue to provide excellent care after months in which their children did not want their care because of their pervasive mistrust. Rather I want to stress the moment-to-moment intersubjective connections that need to occur between parent and child, parent and therapist, and therapist and child if those moments of deeper affect and meaning are to occur.

Comfort and joy emerge from the forward momentum of the attachment relationship that is made up of the open and engaged intersubjective experience between parent and child. It is these moments that are our first therapeutic goals--to assist the child in learning to safely engage with a trusted adult in a reciprocal, affective-reflective dialogue. This experience of reciprocal engagement is an end in itself. Once it is frequently present with the child showing both some ability to become so engaged as well as enjoyment that is occurring at the same time BETWEEN him and his caregiver, then events that might associated with comfort and joy are more easily assimilated into the dialogue. These experiences then truly challenge the mistrusting child's previously developed sense of worth and view of the other. Maybe--yes even with increasing confidence and certitude--she is lovable and of unshakable worth.

This focus on the intersubjective dialogue places us at the core of what is the most therapeutic about DDP. While this might not seem new, it might be gradually forgotten when we look for the deeper contents. In essence, while I speak of the importance of the child's experience of comfort and joy, I need to focus more on the importance of bringing the affective-reflective dialogue to day-to-day chatter and conversation. When these reciprocal connections become frequent in the parent-child relationship, the presence of comfort and joy will occur.

Dan Hughes

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