



DDP international Conference 2014
Kingston, Ontario: A huge success.

Study Days, upcoming training and conferences



This October was the first time that the Attachment Association of Canada and the Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy Institute collaborated to organize an international conference. The conference was held in Kingston Ontario and involved speakers from Canada, USA and United Kingdom. Participants were treated to a balance of theoretical, clinical and experiential presentations, all of which highlighted the importance of our work with children who have experienced developmental trauma and attachment disruptions. Handouts from all of our presenters are available on our website www.DDPnetwork.org

As an organizer and participant of this conference three words arose as descriptors of the three days. Perhaps the first is **humility**. All presenters demonstrated a commitment to their work and deep belief in the efficacy of a therapy grounded deeply in attachment theory, interpersonal neurobiology and the intersubjective experience to help children move from distrust to trust, to remain open to the possibility of relationships. Presenters were not there to “sell” a model, but to encourage others to join on an exciting journey of helping children who have been hurt by relationships to find connections that allow them to move towards mental health. Jon Baylin and Dan Hughes provided us with the brain science that helps us understand how children who have experienced abuse and neglect develop strategies that are reactive and defensive. They then demonstrated how we can create the safety in relationships that allows a shift from this default position. Julie Salverson talked eloquently about how having someone bear witness to our pain allows us to make sense and see ourselves as someone more than a victim. She highlighted the importance of story telling in our journey to make sense of our experiences and led us through some powerful exercises that encouraged play and understanding. Sue Johnson passionately communicated the importance in our global community for love relationships.

Persistence: many of us showed clinical examples from the beginning and end of treatment to highlight how bearing witness and traveling with someone allows for making meaning and the safety to take risks for connection. Robert Spottswood showed examples where persistence to remain open and engaged allowed children and parents to move from closed, reactive states to open and more trusting states within a session. Julie Hudson spoke of her work with families over several years as a true testament to persistence. Sue Johnson demonstrated how her determination to remain attuned to the underlying experiences of a couple allowed them to develop empathy for one-another and move towards a deeper connection. We learned how staying open and engaged, often in the face of reactivity and defensiveness, can allow for co-regulation, co-creation of stories and new ways of relating. A short term, 6-session model is not an option for children who have such pervasive distrust or for adults struggling with attachment issues.

Creativity: There are many roads in ---- play, story-telling, art, Theraplay, acceptance, curiosity, empathy. Several presenters spoke of their programs that

were innovative and born from the understanding for the need for relationship in the healing from abuse and neglect. George Hull Center in Toronto are integrating Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy into their program to better serve families with intergenerational complex trauma. Their clinicians have already seen changes in the attitudes of staff and families when the emphasis is placed upon relationships rather than solutions. Sian Phillips and Deni Melim spoke of a classroom that uses PACE as the guiding principles and the changes evident in the students' self awareness and emotion regulation. George Thompson spoke of an inpatient treatment program in Texas that uses DDP principles to help children and families find connection. He helped us understand the role of medication in complex trauma. Betty Brower showed how when words are not available, art can give us a means of communication. Dafna Lender beautifully weaves Theraplay and DDP to help clients use play as a means of connection.

This conference reminded us all that with humility, persistence and creativity, we can help our clients experience sadness, anger, joy, shame without fear. When we use DDP, we can provide an intersubjective experience where children and adults can learn new ways of perceiving and being and begin to make sense of a difficult past and find ways to heal. As clinicians we are constantly reminded of the strength and resilience present in our clients and are truly honored when they allow us to bear witness.

We look forward to next years conference, which will be held in Anneville, Pennsylvania October 19-21st 2015. We do have a number of study days that are scheduled in the Spring for those of you interested in learning more about DDP. On April 17th, 2015 in Kingston, Sian Phillips will offer a day of study. Robert Spottswood and Deb Shell will offer a day on May 08, 2015 (location on the Eastern Seaboard to be determined) and Dan will also offer a study day in Anneville in the Spring of 2015. Please check our website www.ddpnetwork.org regularly for updates and registration.

Also available on the website are dates and locations of training opportunities. In Canada, we will have a level one in Ottawa January 12-15th and Sioux St. Marie in April (dates to be finalized) and Toronto in August (dates to be finalized). We have a level two in Winnipeg May 1-4th. Please contact drsianphillips@bell.net for further information.

For those of you interested in Sue Johnson's Emotion Focused Therapy, please find information on her model and opportunities for training at www.drjsuejohnson.com

Sian Phillips