

Seattle Psychoanalytic Society and Institute
INFANT OBSERVATION
Year Two Psychoanalytic Training
Instructors: Judy K. Eekhoff, Ph.D., FIPA (jkeekhoff@comcast.net) and
Kelly Shanks Lippman, M.Ed., LMHC (kelly.shanks@comcast.net)
All Trimesters 2019-20: September 13, 2019 – May 29, 2020

INFANT OBSERVATION

Observing an infant weekly from birth to one year gives a unique opportunity to learn about early child development as it is happening “under a microscope.” The evolution of the earliest relationships with parents and siblings and others can be seen in all their complexity. The baby’s own experiences; its efforts to hold itself together, to develop trust, to have and internalize a good object and to develop symbols can all be seen and the growth of the infant’s internal world can be inferred in the process.

For most observers, there is valuable “carry over” from this experience into clinical work. Infant observation supports the growth of an analyst’s ability to recognize the infantile part of patients in the treatment situation, whatever their age. Nuanced observation is an essential skill for psychoanalysts and this class will stimulate the development of an observing mind.

Infant observation is a time consuming and at times profoundly disturbing experience. Observers are immersed in the affective experience of the baby and caregiver within a frame that favors reflection rather than action. Therefore, our group discussion is an essential class component, a vehicle for support and additional learning.

Each of you will be expected to find a family to observe with a baby whose birth will occur near the beginning our class meetings in September. Ideally, you will meet with the parent(s) at least once prior to the delivery/adoption of the infant. In that first meeting you will get to know the family, explain the process and listen carefully to what the parents share about their experience as they prepare to welcome a baby into the family. You will write a summary of this initial contact with the family to share in class. Following your initial visit, once the baby is born/adopted, you will observe the baby for one hour each week and write a process summary to share with the class. Your written reflection will enable you to remember your experience and illuminate that experience for the group. Record what you saw, heard and felt. Attend also to what you find remains out of your memory. When you come to class, please bring a copy of that week’s writing for your colleagues. You may find it helpful to create a notebook within which each observation is kept. These notes are confidential and are not to be shared outside of the group or with the family. At the top of each note write:

Your Name
Date
Observation Number
Baby’s birth date and age in weeks/months

You will each prepare a final paper to be presented in class, approximately three pages in length, which summarizes what you learned from the observation and class experience.

Video: *Observation Observed*, Tavistock Clinic.

At the end of this introductory class, associates will be able to:

- Discuss infant observation guidelines and methodology.
- Formulate a plan for finding a family and baby to observe and consider ways to present themselves when doing so.
- Consider the importance of maintaining frame, boundaries and neutrality in their observation experience.
- Know how to record their experiences in writing.
- Begin to have an appreciation for the experiential group process

September 2019 – June 2020

Learning objectives

Through the experience of observing, writing about and discussing a baby and caregiver as well as noticing their own responses to what is observed, associates will develop the following knowledge, skills and attitudes:

Knowledge:

Associates will recognize moment by moment examples of how an infant's mind and somatic self develop from his/her early caregiving experience.

Associates will learn to observe attachment patterns in infants and caregivers.

Associates will acquire a rich experiential foundation for deeper exploration of theoretical and developmental material in subsequent didactic courses.

Associates will be able to use their infant observation experience to improve treatment interventions and efficacy by recognizing early developmental deficits in the clinical setting.

Skills:

Associates will develop the capacity to distinguish between what they observe and what they think.

Associates will deepen their capacity to reflect on and remain in contact with feeling states observed in the baby, caregiver and those they experience while observing, rather than discharging their feelings through action.

Associates will hone their ability to make use of countertransference as a clinical tool to understand and empathize with both the infant and caregiver's experiences.

Associates will further refine their ability to write about clinical process in a nuanced way that distinguishes between observed process moments and the inferences and hypotheses made regarding the infant's or the parent's experience or state of mind.

Attitudes

Associates will further develop a reverie based analytic stance of openness to clinical observation of patient and self.

FINDING A BABY AND FAMILY FOR INFANT OBSERVATION:

While looking for a family and baby, you might include some of the following in your communication:

As a part of an extensive study program in child development, I am required to do an infant observation and I am looking for a volunteer.

This observation involves seeing the same infant for one year. I will be viewing the ongoing development of the baby during weekly one-hour visits. The observations are not intended to disrupt your family routine in any way.

Previous baby observation volunteers have found this to be a rich and rewarding experience that deepens their own appreciation of the many early developmental milestones. If, however, during the year you become uncomfortable with my presence/observation you may stop participation at any time.

My background is in Clinical Psychology and Psychoanalysis (ADD YOUR OWN HERE) and I bring to this observation ten years of clinical experience in the field of child development (ADD YOUR OWN HERE). I also bring great excitement to watch your infant grow and develop his/her first year of life.

If you are interested in volunteering or have any questions at all, please call me at 206-328-XXXX (YOUR NUMBER). I will be happy to tell you more about the study or give you whatever information you and your family may need to make a decision about participating.

Thank you for your consideration.