

SAI Training

I am a Senior Occupational Therapist working in a CAMHS Community Service within the public healthcare system. I have completed a BSc in Occupational Therapy graduating in 2011. I have a huge professional interest in the area of attachment, trauma and mental health.

I am extremely grateful to have received funding from The Foundation for Professionals in Services to Adolescents (FPSA) to complete the 6-day Adolescent/Adult Sensory Attachment Intervention Training. The training was delivered online via Zoom. This course was developed by Eadaoin Bhreathnach and presented by Eadaoin and Chris West, two extremely well-renowned and highly regarded Occupational Therapists. The course was delivered over 2x 3-day blocks from 09:00 until 4:30 which was 45 hours CPD in total. The dates of the training were 16th, 17th and 18th November 2022 and 7th, 8th and 9th December 2022. The course is suitable for Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists working in LAC, CAMHS or Forensic Mental Health Services.

This is an introductory course to Sensory Attachment Intervention (SAI) and upon completion, participants can state that they are using 'sensory attachment techniques' in their practice as per attendance certificate. The training covers the use of the Just Right State Programme (JRS) for Adults and Adolescents, and in the use of the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) Profile Questionnaire. SAI looks at the process of regulation and co-regulation from an integrative and neuro-sequential perspective.

I found the theory of Sensory Attachment extremely interesting and vital to be able to grasp learning about and implementing the JRS and ANS. I have already implemented numerous learnings from the course into practice. The Just Right State Programme was developed for individuals who struggled to participate in intervention programmes because of their incapacity to regulate their emotional states which applies to many young people I currently work with who have had challenging early relationships and trauma history. With the JRS, I love how versatile it is and how it can be used with individuals, groups or families therefore encouraging synchronicity from all of a young person's support network. Its focus on developing the capacity for self-regulation, co-regulation and reflective functioning is extremely relevant for almost all young people attending our CAMHS service.

The Autonomic Nervous System Profile Questionnaire is a self-report questionnaire that looks at indicators of stress, survival behaviour responses and self-regulating behaviours. It is an exploratory tool for use with individuals to help formulate their regulating needs. Upon using this since attending the SAI training, I have noted I now have a tool to identify how a teenager's nervous system responds to various stimuli. It has helped me to understand the young people I would with on a deeper level and therefore be able to implement more appropriate and helpful interventions. Although I am only getting started implementing the learnings from the course, I feel long-term it will benefit young people, their caregivers and their entire support network.

One thing I reflect upon since having completed this training is how I felt that Sensory Integration Level 1 training should be mandatory before completing this training as it was taken for granted by the trainers that all attendees had completed this course. At times, the sensory integration principles in SAI theory element of the training is at a quite advanced level if you have not completed SI training.

Overall the training was extremely enjoyable and I have thoroughly deepened my understanding in the area of sensory processing and attachment theories and how these areas overlap and combine. I would recommend this training to any OT working in child, adolescent or adult mental health and I thank the FPSA for the opportunity to attend this course.