

Intermediate Course in Family Therapy and Systemic Practice At the Centre for Systemic Studies

The Intermediate Level Systemic Family Therapy course at the Centre for Systemic Studies provided an in-depth exploration of systemic principles, relational dynamics, and therapeutic interventions within family systems. The training emphasized circular questioning, hypothesizing, and reflexivity as core components of systemic practice. As a Senior Assistant Psychologist working with Adopt South in Hampshire, the course was highly relevant to supporting adoptive families and addressing complex relational challenges.

Reflecting on my learning journey, the course significantly enhanced my understanding of systemic thinking. Prior to undertaking this training, my approach to family and individual work was primarily informed by attachment theory and trauma-informed care. While these frameworks remain essential, systemic therapy introduced a broader lens, shifting focus from individual pathology to relational patterns and contexts.

Some of the concepts that stood out particularly for me are discussed below -

- **Circularity and Hypothesising:** I developed skills in generating systemic hypotheses that consider multiple perspectives, including cultural, historical, and relational influences.
- **Language and Meaning:** The course highlighted the importance of language in shaping family narratives. I became more attuned to how dominant discourses influence identity and relationships.
- **Neutrality and Curiosity:** Practicing neutrality allowed me to engage families without imposing assumptions, fostering collaborative meaning-making.

In practice, these skills have enriched my work with adoptive families. For example, when supporting parents managing challenging behaviors, I now explore interactional patterns rather than focusing solely on the child's difficulties. This systemic stance has led to more constructive conversations and improved engagement.

I think one of the most important elements of the course was developing my reflexivity and my understanding of how this impacts on the work I do with families. Reflexivity required me to examine my own position within the therapeutic system. Working in adoption services, I occupy a role shaped by statutory responsibilities and organisational expectations. This positioning can influence how families perceive me, sometimes as an authority figure rather than a collaborative partner. Being aware of the power dynamics allowed me to name this families which turn opened up discussions and allowed for new meaning to be created.

The course encouraged me to critically reflect on:

- **Power Dynamics:** How my professional role intersects with families' experiences of social services and adoption processes.

- Personal Biases: Recognising how my assumptions about family functioning and resilience may unconsciously shape interventions.
- Cultural Contexts: Considering how systemic practice must adapt to diverse family structures and cultural narratives.

Through supervision and peer discussions during the course, I explored strategies to maintain transparency and co-create goals with families. This reflexive stance has strengthened trust and reduced resistance in sessions.

The training has had a tangible impact on my professional identity. I feel more confident integrating systemic ideas into assessments, consultations, and direct work. Moving forward, I aim to:

- Continue developing systemic questioning techniques.
- Engage in further training toward accreditation in systemic practice.
- Share learning with colleagues to embed systemic thinking within my place of work

The Intermediate Level Systemic Family Therapy course has been transformative, deepening both my theoretical knowledge and practical skills. By fostering reflective and reflexive practice, it has enhanced my ability to support adoptive families in navigating complex relational challenges. I am grateful for the Foundation for PSA's support in funding this valuable professional development.

Assistant Psychologist

Training completed January 8th 2025

Alongside the training days I was required to complete 60 hours in a work setting and 10 hours of systemic supervision.