THE BOWLBY CENTRE



Certificate in Attachment Theory and Skills

CERTIFICATE IN ATTACHMENT THEORY AND SKILLS

This course aims to provide you with an introduction to John Bowlby's attachment theory. You will be encouraged to learn about attachment systems and attachment behaviours, and the lifelong need for attachment 'from cradle to grave'. It is aimed at those seeking a deeper understanding of how attachment impacts personal and professional lives. It is therefore suitable for anyone who is keen to examine their own personal development, their relationships as a partner, caregiver, parent, and friend, as well as the professional seeking a deeper knowledge of attachment as applied to clients, work relationships, and leadership.

Participants will be invited to reflect on how different people may seek to create intimacy and closeness in their relationships, while others may choose to avoid it. How those who appear 'clingy' and those who appear 'withdrawing' may seek each other out and have a particular relationship dance which causes ongoing distress and unhappiness. Why do some panic at the slightest hint of rejection, and others appear rejecting? Why do some find it easy to trust and rely on others and some struggle to do this? Some people will spend much of their time thinking and talking about their relationships, and others not at all. An inconsistent way of relating can often confuse and frighten others away. Without an understanding of attachment styles, even loving relationships can be drawn into volatile and unhelpful dynamics, destroying the bonds we most value, with little or no understanding of why this has happened.

The way we have been 'parented' will impact our attachment style, and these patterns can be traced back through several generations. Some parents/caregivers will blame themselves for not being 'good enough' without understanding their own attachment style and how this may have impacted on their parenting style. With an attachment perspective, there is no blaming or shaming, but understanding.

Children and young people will have their own attachment styles and this can impact their relationships with parents/carers, teachers, friendships, and even their experience of school.

All professionals will take their attachment style into the workplace, impacting their behaviours, relationships with colleagues, and how they both lead and respond to authority.

THE COURSE AIMS

To provide you with:

- an introductory knowledge and understanding of attachment theory and research
- an understanding of your own attachment patterns, how these have developed to protect you and how these might impact your professional and personal life
- an understanding of how you can apply attachment patterns and these protective strategies to your personal and professional lives, for example as parents/caregivers/ partners, teachers, health and social care workers, and friends
- an opportunity through skills and facilitated group work to learn more about yourself and how you interact with others and why and how they interact with and impact you

WHO IS THE COURSE AIMED AT?

This course is designed for people with some clinical experience or training, including trainee therapists, counsellors, psychotherapists, psychologists, and practitioners from a range of therapeutic modalities who wish to develop an attachment-informed approach to their work.

We welcome applications from students and trainee therapists, counsellors and psychotherapists from different modalities, psychologists, and other professionals working in mental health and related fields. The course offers a foundation in attachment theory and explores its application to both clinical practice and personal development.

Reasons for applying:

- You are interested in exploring training as an attachment-based psychoanalyst.
- You are a student or trainee therapist seeking to broaden your clinical understanding of attachment.
- You are a counsellor, psychotherapist, psychologist, or practitioner from another therapeutic modality who wishes to integrate attachment-informed thinking into your work.
- You work in mental health, or social care, supporting people across the lifespan, recognising that attachment is a lifelong process.
- You work with children, young people, parents, carers, foster or adoptive families, or in family support services.

We also welcome applications from anyone with relevant professional experience who has a genuine interest in understanding attachment theory and its implications for relationships, development, and therapeutic practice.

MAIN COMPONENTS OF THE COURSE:

1. The theoretical seminar
2. The clinical seminar
3. The experiential group seminar

CLINICAL SKILLS

The course comprises a mixture of formal teaching of theory, informal discussions and small group work. The training will look at different ways attachment styles may manifest in a clinical setting and how this understanding can lead to more effective communication between different attachment styles.

Alongside the theoretical component, you will have skills-based seminars. These are aimed at developing your ability to:

- listen deeply and attentively, and to be listened to
- recognise and effectively respond to attachment communication
- understand bodily (non-verbal) communication
- develop your ability to understand what is being communicated versus what is actually said
- consider what a particular behaviour might really be communicating

These skills will help you to develop more enriching communication in all your relationships.

EXPERIENTIAL GROUP

You will have the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of yourself and others from an attachment perspective, in a 'boundaried' and facilitated group space. This aims to provide you with a valuable, contained and facilitated space to work with others in the group, thinking about your own and others' attachment styles and how these impact yourself and others in the group.

WHAT WILL BE EXPECTED FROM THE COURSE PARTICIPANTS?

The course participants are expected to attend consistently and on time.

You will be asked to contribute your own thoughts and ideas and link these with your own personal and/or professional life.

You will be asked to keep your own journal in whatever way suits you.

You will write a short reflective piece towards the end of the course to consolidate your learning.

You will be required to maintain respect for your fellow students and recognise the confidentiality of their contributions.

You will be expected to actively engage in all the activities, including the skills-based training and the experiential group.

You will need to have access to technology which enables a Zoom link from a private space which maintains confidentiality with minimal disruption when you are online.

You will be required to complete any pre-course reading or other preparation, such as watching a webinar or listening to a podcast.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

REDUCED PRICE FOR ATTENDANCE AT BOWLBY CLINICAL FORUMS

These are usually held every month on a Saturday between 11am-1pm. These will often include a discussion of clinical work using an attachment lens.

REDUCED PRICE FOR THE ATTACHMENT JOURNAL

A journal which includes academic writing around various psychotherapy topics with an attachment perspective.

REDUCED PRICE FOR ATTENDANCE AT THE ANNUAL JOHN BOWLBY MEMORIAL CONFERENCE

A one-day online conference which will address a particular theme from an attachment perspective.

OUTLINE OF THE CURRICULUM

SEMINAR 1

INTRODUCTION TO ATTACHMENT THEORY

This seminar aims to introduce the development of attachment theory, with a brief outline of the history of the theory, focusing on John Bowlby, his life and the development and core concepts of attachment.

SEMINAR 2

ATTACHMENT SYSTEM AND ATTACHMENT BEHAVIOURS

You will be encouraged to think about the attachment system and attachment behaviours, the scientific base of attachment, and the lifelong need for attachment 'from cradle to grave'. You will be encouraged to discuss the concepts of the secure base and the circle of security. The aim is to help you understand the typical relational patterns of clinging and pursuing vs withholding and withdrawing whereby both party's patterns can be exacerbated and how this, if not understood, can lead to unnecessary arguments or break up.

SEMINAR 3

SEPARATION AND SEPARATION ANXIETY

This seminar aims to explore the impact of separation on the child from its primary caregiver. Why are children so distressed by the absence of their primary caregiver? What is our understanding of separation anxiety? We will also look at 'psychological separation', the emotional absence of the physically present caregiver and its impact on the child. We will help you to make links to how this translates to adult relationships and where this can activate attachment strategies in a partnership leading to long-term animosity or a stalemate between a couple who, deep down, love each other.

SEMINAR 4

LOSS AND MOURNING

This seminar explores Bowlby's view of mourning as a psychological process and bereavement as an irreversible form of separation. You will be encouraged to think about Bowlby's view of grief as attachment behaviour and its links with depression. You will be encouraged to reflect on how individuals, when unable to grieve or unaware that early childhood grief has been triggered, may adopt unhelpful patterns of behaviour.

SEMINAR 5

SECURE AND INSECURE ATTACHMENT IN CHILDHOOD

This seminar aims to explore the quality of a child's attachment to their caregiver. Participants will consider Mary Ainsworth's development of the Strange Situation test for classifying childhood attachment patterns, and examine the features of different attachment styles. You will also begin to reflect on how your early experiences of 'care', or lack thereof, may have influenced your own patterns and life experiences.

SEMINAR 6

ADULT ATTACHMENT

This seminar aims to focus on the assessment of adult attachment styles, and their correspondence to childhood attachment patterns. You will hear about Mary Main's development of the Adult Attachment Interview, and how to recognize different attachment styles in others. We cover how, usually by the age of one, our patterns of relating (internal working models) are formed in the way that as adults, we make friends, relate to our partners, attract potential partners, 'parent' children, and relate to others in the workplace.

SEMINAR 7

AN EXPLORATION OF THE PREOCCUPIED ATTACHMENT STYLE

This seminar aims to explore how to recognise the preoccupied attachment styles and how this may impact on yourself, others and your personal and professional relationships. This strategy and internal working models can often be counterproductive and wreak havoc in our relationships with others. We will aim to consider how an early history of, often unreliable, hot and cold, rejecting or intrusive caregiving patterns, alternating with love and care, can lead to a preoccupied pattern of relating to others.

SEMINAR 8

AN EXPLORATION OF THE DISMISSIVE ATTACHMENT STYLE

This seminar aims to explore how you can recognise the dismissive avoidant attachment style, and how this strategy may impact yourself, others, and your personal and professional relationships. We will consider how an early history, often of neglect, may lead to an avoidant dismissive style and the internal working model which may be present.

SEMINAR 9

AN EXPLORATION OF THE DISORGANISED ATTACHMENT STYLE

This seminar aims to focus on the disorganised attachment style, its origins in relational trauma, and its effects on adult mental health. Participants will be invited to reflect on the whole range of emotional expression, from feelings of being uncontained and explosive to feelings of flatness and dullness.

SEMINAR 10

MAKING USE OF ATTACHMENT THEORY

This seminar aims to provide you with an opportunity to revisit the learning from the previous seminars and to understand how you can use this learning in all areas of your life.

THE PRACTICALITIES

HOW LONG IS THE COURSE?

10-day course, running monthly on Saturdays from September 2027 to July 2028

WHEN IS IT DELIVERED?

One Saturday per month

HOW IS THE COURSE DELIVERED?

This course will be delivered online via Zoom.

WHAT ARE THE DATES OF THE COURSE? 2027-2028

The dates of the course are:

2027 Autumn Term 1

- September 26th
- October 23rd
- November 27th

2028 Spring Term 2

- January 29th
- February 19th
- March 18th
- April 29th

2028 Summer Term 3

- May 13th
- June 10th
- July 15th

WHAT ARE THE TIMES OF THE COURSE?

10.15 am-4.30 pm (UK time) with breaks

Approximate timings - these may be subject to change:

- Theoretical seminars 10.15 - 12.15
- Lunch 12.15 -1.15
- Skills-based seminar 1.15-2.45
- Experiential group 3.00 – 4.30

NB: Week One will run from **10:00 a.m. to 6:15 p.m.**, and Week Ten will run from **10:15 a.m. to 6:15 p.m.** Week One will include a **welcome session from 10:00 to 10:30 a.m.**, and both Weeks One and Ten will include a **group tutorial with the course tutor from 4:45 to 6:15 p.m.**

WHAT ARE THE CRITERIA FOR A PLACE ON THE COURSE?

There are no formal criteria for a place on the course. We are looking for participants who actively want to learn about attachment theory and will engage in the learning process.

IS THERE AN APPLICATION FORM AND INTERVIEW FOR THE COURSE?

Yes, you will need to complete an application form and undertake a 30-minute interview. There is an interview fee of £50

HOW MUCH DOES THE COURSE COST?

The course fee is £1,670

IS THERE A DEPOSIT?

Yes, we require a non-refundable deposit of £250. This is applied to the course fee.

We will refund any deposit should the course not run. The deposit is retained if you withdraw from the course after acceptance.

CAN I PAY IN INSTALMENTS?

Yes, you can pay by instalments. Ten monthly instalments of £167.

DO I HAVE TO PAY IF I MISS A SESSION?

Yes, you will need to pay for any missed sessions.

IS THERE AN ASSESSMENT PROCESS DURING THE COURSE?

No, there is no assessment process, and no grades will be given during the course. Your reflective writing will be discussed with your tutor.

HOW MANY PARTICIPANTS WILL THERE BE ON THE COURSE?

To ensure that there is an opportunity for everyone to contribute during the seminars and to optimise the relational learning experience, we anticipate the course will be for no more than 15 participants.

WILL THERE BE A COURSE TUTOR?

Yes, there will be a course tutor who will hold a group tutorial in weeks one and ten. You will also meet with the course tutor at the mid-way point to discuss how the course is going.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO OBTAIN THE CERTIFICATE?

The certificate is for attendance on the course. The full certificate is awarded through an 80% plus attendance.

If your attendance is below 80%, we can still award you a certificate of attendance for the seminars actually attended.

DO I NEED TO BE IN THERAPY TO UNDERTAKE THE COURSE?

There is no requirement to be in therapy during the course; however, some may wish to, as the course may bring up personal material which you may want to explore further with a therapist.