

In Praise and Celebration of IRRAPT

Clive Turpin



Let me first declare my stance - I think IRRAPT is brilliant (and I'm not alone in this. I speak from my experience and this will also relate to a trainer pairing of Hilary Beard and Steve Potter, as course facilitators which some will share alongside me. Other graduates will have experienced a different pairing. What is common, so far, is that whenever I meet other IRRAPT graduates, they've held a strong attachment for the course and briefly drift off into sharing of fond memories.

On the first residential day of training, I recall Hilary saying that we are likely to "bump into parts of ourselves" and she was so very accurate with this and it is such a lovely way of putting what can be a very complex and challenging encounter. It also seems to remain in the vocabulary of many of my cohort, and probably others' too.

The training part of the course consists of six evenly spread, Monday to Friday weekly residential blocks over two years

and is held in a beautiful location in small village of Cropthorne, Worcestershire. Other than a late morning start on the first day and an earlier finish on the last day of each block, you are in programme from just after 9am until 9pm. Yes, you've read that correctly - the training optimises the residential component. You could also see this as definitely getting training value! The residential aspect provides something enrichingly different that is both relaxed and can be intense. Talking of enrichment, you're well fed from breakfast, through to baked goodies at tea break, usually a 3-course lunch, then more baked goodies in the afternoon and another 3-course meal in the evening. Holland House cuisine has become legendary amongst cohorts.

The venue is a wonderful building comprising of old and new'ish. The grounds are stunning with two long lawns with mature trees, herb and a rose garden, a sunken one too and a lower garden that runs to the banks of the River Avon.

Stepping into the garden evokes an immediate sense of space and a great contrast to the degree of attention and focus inside. The garden space as a whole is perfect for a solitary stroll or daydream, or quiet chat with others.

Unsurprisingly, the programme has been well thought out with a good ebb and flow through the day, and week. This comprises of: conversational sessions exploring theory through journal articles and book chapters; training sessions; experiential sessions; home group presentations; small personal reflective groups; and the day finishes with a whole group reflective meeting. Some of the sessions flow from one to the other, but there is also plenty of space in the day and mid-week, everyone has a free afternoon, which is its own tremendous resource. *Home groups* (non-residential) are based around geographic locations through the cohort. These groups meet on a monthly basis to explore and discuss journal articles and book chapters, and each group presents to the rest of the cohort at each residential. This offers lots of opportunities to develop confidence to present, as well as being a fun and creative process.

Each residential module has a theme including: the therapeutic relationship and its challenges; Human development across the life-span; Cognitive and Analytic theory; Vygotsky and Bakhtin; therapeutic challenges with the 'hard to help'; research; time, change and limitation; the CAT process; skills in staying put and moving on; CAT in different contexts; Self in society; working with difference; ethical issues; personal and professional

development. Immersing into an area for exploring, individually, in small groups and as a whole group is a real benefit. There is more time and the opportunity of multiple positions to explore things from, which can present plenty of challenges. Feedback sessions – individually and with small peer groups are incorporated as a helpful space to reflect and learn.

The course promotes research and involves establishing small research project groups. This is a great opportunity to share different experiences of research, demystify some aspects and help it feel more accessible. Each project gets presented to the whole group.

After such a full-on day, how people use the space afterwards varies hugely with many taking long baths and early nights. I was strongly drawn to staying up late talking and thinking about what we'd experienced in the day and trying to make sense of some of the 'bumps'. It became a theme of not going to bed on the same day that I awoke, and

there seemed to be no difficulty in recruiting others to join me.

Some powerful experiences can occur on a residential and the group can be a strong activator and container. For me, I encountered a few things that took time to settle before I was able to get a better sense of what had happened, many aspects of which are unlikely to have been as enriching as they were without friends and peers in the cohort.

The training really tunes you into the subtleties of things, underlying aspects and the impact of experiences – exploring the simplicity and complexity of encounters. The focus throughout the training is connecting more with what has shaped us and how this informs who we are as therapists and how we integrate this to our practise. This approach is consolidated further by two periods of personal therapy, one to be CAT and the other can be something else, the latter option alone is enriching.

A frequent question that is asked is how does the psychotherapy training differ from practitioner training, and I come back to the same thing – it's more involving, more is asked and required of you. It's immersive: I was thinking more; feeling more; and trying to integrate all of the encounters. I undertook the training to become a better therapist and finished it feeling exactly that, I felt more integrated personally and as a therapist. I was more confident in my abilities to trust myself, others and in the process of a shared journey of understanding.

If you're considering IRRAPT, why not come along to one of the fundraising CPD events and workshops that'll be put on across the country by Hilary Beard and IRRAPT graduates. Keep checking the ACAT site.

<https://www.acat.me.uk/page/cat+psychotherapy+training>

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ICATA View From The Floor

Mary-Clare Wilson-Verrall

Colleagues came from around the globe in June 2019 for a conference showcasing CAT's diversity and international growth. "*Bella Italia*" was the location, and the city of Ferrara in Emilia Romagna was hot, hot, hot. The temperature was unusually high and the atmosphere sultry, but the real heat came in the discussions: the sharing, the companionship and the soaring degrees of generosity of our hosts.

The theme of the ICATA conference 2019 was on *Exploring and integrating dialogues in CAT*. Everyone who

attended took the chance to maximise on dialogue and the all-round interactivity. It was a fertile ground for networking among international practitioners/therapists from fifteen countries, sharing contrasting experiences and ideas all underpinned with the familiarity of our shared CAT backgrounds. Also underpinned by a few days in the wonderful setting of Ferrara – sharing food and Prosecco!

The pre-conference workshop by Mikael Leiman, *Reformulation*

on the fly: using Dialogical sequence analysis as a focusing tool in dialogue, explored his supervisory technique of clinicians role-playing their clients. This then led to a very moving experience when a member of the audience came forward to talk about a live encounter in her life – choosing to draw on personal experience of loss and separation. Leiman gave voice to Bakhtin, exploring how important things come back in dialogue. "*The word wants to be heard*," he reminded us – noting that clients never start in unimportant places and that words have power.