

# Sensory Attachment Interventions

## 2 Courses by Eadaoin Bhreathnach MSc. Consultant Occupational Therapist & Attachment Counsellor

### Sensory Integration, Attachment & Trauma

Family Futures is pleased to be able to host these 2 courses run by Eadaoin Bhreathnach who has innovatively integrated attachment theory and sensory integration, theory and practice. This approach fits within the framework of developmental trauma as an important therapeutic intervention.



### An Introduction to Sensory Attachment Interventions

**7-8 July 2009**

This 2-day course is for professionals who are involved in therapeutic, educational, and daily care of children at risk, accommodated or adopted.

**Cost: £200+VAT**



### Occupational Therapy Training in SAI Sensory-Attachment Intervention.

#### Level One Course

***'An Integrative Approach to Self Regulation'***

**25-28 November 2008 & 5-6 March 2009**

This 6-day course will look at up to date theories on the process of 'self regulation' and 'co regulation' which include the process of sensory modulation, sensory discrimination, regulation of arousal states, and attachment. It will draw on the writings of theorists & clinicians such as Ayres, De Gangi, Dunn, Otter, Dahl Reeves, Greenspan, Stern, Perry, Schore, & Crittenden.

The course is specifically designed for Occupational Therapists who work in Child and Adolescent Mental Health and in Paediatrics. Emphasis will be on theory based analysis and practice. Therapists will be taught the use of profiles, assessment charts and treatment techniques. Videos and photographs will be used to illustrate each type of dysfunction and treatment programmes.

**Cost: £600+VAT**

For further details and an application form, please contact Family Futures Training Services Co-ordinator; [Joanne@familyfutures.co.uk](mailto:Joanne@familyfutures.co.uk)  
Tel: 020 7354 4161 / [www.familyfutures.co.uk](http://www.familyfutures.co.uk)

# Introduction to Sensory Attachment Intervention 'SAI'

Clinical experience of working with children from secure backgrounds, who have sensory processing disorders, would indicate they have emotional difficulties that are sensory based. Certain everyday experiences can be unpleasant and even overwhelming if a child is sensory defensive or is unable to interpret and organise incoming sensory information for use. These children may easily become highly aroused and either act out, withdraw, or display "freeze" types of behaviour as a result.

Children with a history of separation, loss, abuse, and neglect are likely to present with a combination of sensory processing and attachment difficulties. Their capacity to tolerate sensory stimulation from the environment and others is affected. Intolerance of everyday events may be because there is an association with early loss and trauma (emotional defensiveness), or because they find the actual sensory experience unpleasant (sensory defensiveness).

**Sensory-Attachment Intervention** was originally developed by the author in recognition of the special sensory attachment needs of children who are fostered. Sensory-attachment analysis helps identify if the underlying reasons for behaviour are sensory or emotionally based. This approach is based on the theories of Sensory Integration, Attachment Classification and Symbolic Play.

**Attachment Classification** theory offers insight into how insecure attachment leads to specific types of behavioural patterns. Understanding the classification patterns enables the Carer to know how to appropriately relate to the child and avoid escalating an already tense and possibly threatening situation. Attachment classification however does not address the impact of sensory processing problems on parent child engagement patterns.

**Sensory Integration** theory provides a neurobehavioural analysis of how sensory processing difficulties contribute to a breakdown in behaviour, and provides play activities that facilitate the process of self-regulation. However there is a danger that therapists, who are only trained in Sensory Integration may view an emotionally avoidant child, who is compliant, as being regulated, or an aggressive rejecting child as sensory defensive. Sensory Integration theory does not look at the use of sensation for emotional regulation purposes or take account of the attachment relationship.

**Symbolic play** allows the child to safely express intense feelings, instead of acting out in a maladaptive way. Symbolic Play can only occur when the child is sufficiently regulated i.e. the child is able to maintain the optimal arousal state to adaptively engage with others and the environment. When the child can play symbolically in a sensory attachment setting that provides therapeutic spaces such as Womb; Mother-Child; Father-Child; and Independent; the process becomes even more dynamic and effective. This new integrated approach facilitates the connection between affect and action and affect and interaction. It is a multi-sensory approach and provides sensory experiences that are both nurturing and challenging. SAI also facilitates the bridge between the imaginary world and reality as the children and their carers can physically test out their capacity to engage in ways that are mutually regulating.