



Association for Psychoanalytic
Psychotherapy of Western Australia

"...the fine-grained quality of perception learned in infant observation is an essential resource for understanding in many clinical settings." (Michael Rustin, 2006)

APPWA Infant Observation Course

Infant Observation is a foundation, and often the entry point, for psychoanalytic psychotherapy training. Developed by Esther Bick at the Tavistock Clinic, London, in the 1940's, it is a distinct empirical case study method. This training provides the cornerstone of observational skills, not only of the intricacies of this critical stage in human development, coming into being, but also reflection of the psychodynamics of early relationships and psychoanalysis of the transference that emerges in being present in such an intimate environment over an extended period.

The APPWA Infant Observation course provides analysis through weekly, confidential small group seminars for the first 12 months of a baby's life. It is structured as four terms of ten weeks each, with 2 weeks break between terms, conducted by experienced members of APPWA. Completing an Infant Observation is a requisite for APPWA training and those completing this course, concurrent with personal psychotherapy, will be given credit. Personal therapy is essential for observers throughout this process, to assist in containing the strong feelings that tend to emerge during the observation experience.

2026-2027 Course Dates:

- November '26** 4 x 60min sessions
Preparation for finding a baby due around the beginning of February 2027
- February '27** Infant Observation Seminars begin
40 x 90 min sessions
Choice of in-person observation group in Fremantle or online observation group

The Process

Most people find the course quite demanding but ultimately rewarding and a professional experience to lean on throughout one's career. It involves observing a newborn baby at their home for their first year, usually at the same time each week, for one hour. No notes are taken during the observation, but it is helpful to make space to write up notes soon after you have done the observation. Some people find dictating observations on their drive back from the observation useful.

These notes are then written up and copies circulated to all members of the group. Each week one person presents the written record of an observation, and we discuss what has been observed and their possible implications. The group contributes a great deal to the learning process. It can be emotionally demanding. No reading or theory will be set during the observation. Overall, especially for experienced professionals, it is best to concentrate on the observation experience and leave theory until the end.

How do families benefit?

Families often report how positively affirming and delightful it is to have a regular visitor who is curious and focused on their new baby, reinforcing how important this little person and their stage of development is. Observers model the importance of the maternal gaze and reverie for the baby, often creating a frame for the parents to stop and wonder, to become more attuned, reflective, and playful with their baby. There are many new developments in the use of Infant Observation techniques as a therapeutic intervention in a range of clinical settings, however, this is not the purpose of this training Infant Observation.

Requirements

- Clinical professionals with significant post-graduate clinical experience.
- Members of their professional organisation and registered as required.
- Bound by a formal code of ethics of their relevant membership bodies. In addition they will be expected to be mindful of the ethical standards of APPWA, and to abide by these standards. (See Appendix 4: APPWA Statement of Ethical Principles for the Practice of Analytic Psychotherapy.)
- Weekly or twice weekly psychotherapy for the duration of the course. For those considering the full psychoanalytic psychotherapy training the selection of the therapist should be a member from the APPWA or PPAA list for the Infant Observation to be credited.

Fees

\$120 + GST per group seminar session. (Nov \$90 + GST /session)

Paid in advance to APPWA at the beginning of each term (ie. \$1200/term).

Email application form to training@appwa.org.au

Jennifer Jackson, Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist

APPWA Infant Observation Seminar Leader & Director of Training
