



**RMPTI's Keynote address at *BAPT Annual Conference*,
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Conference Day

“To be Directive or Non Directive? That is the question”

It was with great anticipation that I booked up for the conference focussing on the Play Therapy Dimensions Model (PTDM). Despite the hours and the cost of travel it would entail from the south coast I was determined to go. I had been introduced to the model the previous year resulting in many stimulating discussions around the use of the various quadrants. Here was a model that could hold the various ways of working and value each one. The directive/non directive debate has been present in our profession for as long as I can remember yet I am sure you would all agree that the main focus for us all is to be child centred in all that we do and say. Being led by the child means exactly that, to be so attuned to the child's psychological needs that the way in which you work will create opportunities for personal growth within a containing therapeutic relationship.

This appeared to be Lorri Yassenik and Ken Gardner's focus too, evident in the four quadrants circling the child in the PTDM diagram. The PTDM model had grown out of witnessing the different ways in which play therapists from all over the world worked. They discovered that the non directive approach was not everybody's starting point and yet these different modalities could also be an effective way of working with children. Despite the differing approaches the common denominator was the belief in the importance of being child centred. Lorri and Ken endeavoured to categorise these ways of working into different dimensions whilst keeping the child as central. As I write this I am reminded of a metaphor of a peace treaty holding each theoretical orientation and reminding us of our common goal.

The model was presented as a decision making guide that can assist in the weaving motion of responsiveness. PTDM is not to be seen as a standalone model but rather a container for the ways of working showing the relationship dance between therapist and child. So the question became less about being directive or non-directive and more about exploring the use of self within the different dimensions of Play Therapy.

As the day unfolded they took us on a journey firstly reflecting on eclecticism v integration and then what it was to be an integrative play therapist. Through one exercise of scored statements they helped us to explore our own theoretical orientation to play therapy that produced a variety of results that I for one would like to discuss further. It was fascinating to see the cross section of different theoretical orientations that the exercise exposed, showing that many of us had integrated other theoretical orientations into who we are as therapists. Our personal theoretical foundations form the bedrock of our practice and it is onto these foundations we build and integrate subsequent learning and formulate our way of being. The visual diagram of PTDM clearly reminds us that the child is at the core and our role is to be so attuned that every retreat or advance could be plotted onto the chart like choreographed steps in a dance. This was further explored through the day as we examined our use of self in responding to the child and his/her play. This could be a glide horizontally along the directiveness continuum or vertically on the consciousness scale and the use of self within each dimension can change and be plotted within that dimension. This makes up the intricate dance of the therapeutic relationship. Through video clips we were asked to consider when the therapist made a 'hit' and when was it a 'miss' in terms of her use of self in the room. Again this got my mind reflecting on the many possible 'misses' that actually shifted and challenged the dance to move to another level. The careful use of self within a highly attuned relationship can ensure that

nothing in the therapy room is wasted.

So, for all of us at the conference we need to ask ourselves what does this mean for us? What do we take back and how will it impact our personal practices? I for one have begun to write in my notes the quadrants worked in and consciously noticing what initiates the movement over a session. Is it the child or me that brought about the shift? Am I remaining attuned and thus child centred or have I gone off on my own agenda? Homing in on these details can bring greater clarity on an issue as well as increasing your personal reflexivity.

Lastly I want to emphasise again that Lorri and Ken stated this was not a new model of play therapy and not for us to fall into the trap of following it religiously. Therefore it is of paramount importance that we are grounded and secure in our theoretical foundations, that we know what theories drive us, what is the core into which we are integrating new thinking. This decision making tool is in its purest form a guide for us as we endeavour to remain child centred to the core.

Jackie Horne

Full Member: Sussex



Key note Speech by Lorri Yasenik and Ken Gardner

This was the first BAPT conference that I had been to where the same speakers were going to present for the whole day and, as someone who delivers training in a variety of organisations, I was intrigued to see how Lorri Yasenik and Ken Gardner would manage this. It was



apparent, very quickly, that they have worked and trained together for a long time as their style of presentation was engaging and easy going (not an easy thing to do when presenting to such a large audience.)

Lorri and Ken were clear that the aim of the presentation was to increase the audience's understanding of the 2 primary dimensions of consciousness and directiveness and their Play Therapy Dimensions Model.

To begin the session all participants were encouraged to do an exercise to help consider Integration versus Eclecticism in our practice.

- Integration - A belief in theory, a seeking to find agreement between theories and legitimisation through scientific methods.
- Eclecticism - A focus on functionality, no "grand narrative" everything goes, based on clinical needs.

Lorri and Ken then talked us through their Play Therapy dimensions model which incorporates

- Quadrant 1 Active utilisation
- Quadrant 2 Open discussion and

exploration

- Quadrant 3 Non intrusive responding
- Quadrant 4 Co-facilitation

Outside the quadrants on opposite sides are conscious/unconsciousness and directiveness/non-directiveness. We were shown clips from practice that demonstrated the flow between the quadrants, the consciousness continuum and the directiveness dimension.

This led onto theories of the 2 levels of self awareness the private (conceptual) and the public (perceptual) and the importance of the therapist being able to identify where they are in this.

All of this was covered in the morning and then in the afternoon there was more discussion and practical experience of using the Degree of Immersion: Therapist Use of Self Scale.

The whole day included a brilliant mix of lecture, participant activity and video examples of case work so the time sped by. There was so much theoretical content in the material presented



by the speakers that it is impossible to do it justice in this short piece. However I would heartily recommend all therapists examining the Play Therapy dimensions model and the Therapist Use of Self Scale as being very useful tools in our own reflective practice and/or supervision.

Veronica Etherington
Full Member: Surrey.

Reflections on BAPT conference June 2014

I am a play therapy student at Roehampton University and have just finished my first year of studying the MA. This was the first time I have attended the BAPT conference and as I travelled up to the Birmingham venue I could feel myself becoming a mix of excited and nervous! I was really looking forward to attending the Life Story workshop with Carol Platteuw on Friday, and to listening to Lorri Yasenik and Ken Gardner talk about the Play Therapy Dimensions. But underneath the excitement was a spattering of butterflies as I wondered about how it would be networking and meeting other Play Therapists, who are already established and practiced in their field... after all I was only a first year student! However I was met by such friendly faces and immediately felt at ease during the weekend.

As a student attending Carol's workshop, it was fantastic to gain some ideas of how I could practically use Life Story work with children in the future, having no prior experience of it. I found that the theoretical underpinning she used to talk about the grief process that children go through when removed from a carer, was really helpful to understand where life story work could be used. I will certainly be considering the skills and their potential for use post-qualifying. Carol's gentle manner and sensitivity was evident in how she explained the activities, and she gave us practical exploration of the 'river of life' activity. Overall, it was an informative and interesting workshop.

As a student experiencing the Saturday presentation, I really enjoyed how Lorri and Ken encouraged us to consider new ways of thinking and conceptualising the process occurring within sessions, whilst also reflecting on our core approaches. During our first year on the MA, the main focus is about developing the skills of Child-Centred practice, so I was surprised that the quiz Lorri and Ken gave out, revealed that I had a high proportion of Gestalt

approaches in my thinking; this highlighted for me that each therapist is an individual and although I have been taught mostly child-centred techniques, there is a lot of 'me' in there too which will make me different from the other students in my cohort.

Lorri and Ken encouraged us to consider therapist immersion; low immersion being fully non-directive, where the therapist follows the child direction entirely, and high immersion being where the therapist is more directive. I found myself reflecting on my own immersion within my sessions. I felt that it would be a really useful learning tool in supervision for students to consider our use of self within our sessions, and to reflect on whether our immersion was on track, or needed to be increased/decreased. This is something that I have found challenging during my studies as I begin to learn how to mediate my use of self for what is appropriate for individual clients. What I liked about this model was the fact that it is based upon scales, therefore giving the therapist the freedom to move up and down the scale, even within one session, mediating how non-directive/ directive they feel is appropriate to be to meet that particular child's needs.

Lorri and Ken explained how children also work within a scale of consciousness to unconsciousness, meaning that sometimes, a child will work through something consciously, talking about or playing out directly the events and feelings. Other times a child's communication may be more unconscious where the meaning is deeply embedded within a metaphor. This idea of consciousness began to make me question my practice; could it be possible that therapists also work on a scale of consciousness and unconsciousness too, whereby we are either consciously and sometimes unconsciously aware of our process and the child's process? Perhaps therapists should continually be trying to bring the processes into their consciousness? Or perhaps sometimes it is appropriate that processes within the play therapy relationship remain

within the context of the metaphor. I was left inspired and wanting to know more, and so my summer project is to read the book and find out!

Anna Neal

Student Member: University of Roehampton

A Journey to the Conference and Beyond

So, there I was, haring along in a train bound for Birmingham New Street, to attend this year's conference entitled 'To be directive or Non-directive, that is the question'. I am just completing my first year of the MSc Play Therapy course at Treforest of the University of South Wales and so those who know me are aware of my journeying from Nottingham to attend lessons once a week in term time and so, (breathing a sigh of relief), this journey was a joy in comparison.

I had chosen to stay at a hotel in town rather than on the Aston campus and so my walk to the Conference Centre led me past the colourful sights of Birmingham's local hostelrys and its beautifully imposing and huge terracotta red brick buildings of the law courts. I admit to having been just a tad anxious about meeting a whole group of new people and I really needn't have worried as the atmosphere was immediately most welcoming and friendly. There was a buzz of expectation as we all gathered around the refreshments on offer after registration. For some, including me, to get some necessary caffeine in our systems ...and the biscuits, of course, are always a bonus at these occasions.

The first of my experiential workshops was 'Pushing Rivers Up Stream' with the Gestalt play therapist, Claire Harrison-Breed. Her sense of fun and positivity was contagious. Claire imbued the group with energy and enthusiasm to embark on our exercise; to individually create a physical shield which was then used as