

Affiliate Update: Austin in Connection

2009 in Review:

Fostering Secure Attachment and IPNB in the Community

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Austin in Connection (AinC)—the “in” stands for interpersonal neurobiology (IPNB)—is completing its second year as an affiliate of the Global Association of Interpersonal Neurobiology Studies (GAINS). We are a multidisciplinary group of professionals dedicated to promoting healthy attachments and positive emotional development in individuals, families, and the community. One of our ongoing goals is to provide training for Austin’s healthcare providers and the community at large, so that the theory and practice of IPNB can be incorporated in the work we do and gradually pervade the consciousness of this area.

One arm of this endeavor is bringing key innovators in the field of IPNB to Austin. This year, Allan Schore’s ongoing study group met in June and August, bringing together community leaders interested in infant mental health, clinicians deepening their understanding of the role of the right hemisphere in development and treatment, and educators seeking ways to apply IPNB in their classrooms. In October, AinC also offered a weekend series highlighting Stan Tatkin’s IPNB-informed work with couples. This project started with a community lecture, followed by an all-day clinical workshop, and finished with an in-depth case consultation limited to a small group of professionals. This series sold out and led to further study of Dr. Tatkin’s techniques.



We are fortunate to also have an abundance of local talent, so the second arm of our educational plan invites these skilled people to hold groups throughout the year to maintain and develop vital community participation. In 2009, our Clinical Applications Group met once every other month on Fridays. Each meeting featured a mental health or health care professional from the Austin community discussing a clinical treatment model or topic relevant to the application of theory and research on attachment and IPNB. Topics included Infant Attachment and Health Care with Bettina Vaelleo MD; AEDP (Accelerated Experiential Dynamic Psychotherapy) presented by Candyce Ossefort-Russell, LPC; the Adult Attachment Projective offered by Rebecca Hayhurst, LCSW, MS; The Internal Family Systems Model with Frederick Bryan, LPC-I; Preoccupied and Dismissive Attachment in Psychotherapy discussed by Sue Marriott, LCSW, CGP; Mentalization and Disorganized Attachment, a co-presentation by Shannon Huggins and Christine Winston; and Parent-Infant Psychotherapy: Psychoanalytic Dyadic Therapy Pioneered at the Anna Freud Centre of London offered by Tina Adkins, LMSW. Each program was very well received, built our membership base and discussion focused not just on the content of the program but on the process of bringing the participants themselves together in the room. So supporting local leadership, growing relationships among therapist neighbors and enriching our communities overall education about attachment were all

accomplished throughout the year with this programming.

Our third approach to integrating IPNB into the community involves a monthly discussion series, Year of Conversations, offering diverse topics that promote and support developing community leadership. These gatherings featured experiential and lively community discussions led by local clinicians and presenters on various topics. 2009 discussion themes included “Cultivating Presence in the Container of Time: Mindful Awareness, Sensory Stabilization and Grounding” co-led by Gaea Logan, MA, LPCS, and Kalila Homann, MA, LPC-S, ADTR; “Staying In Connection: Developing the Capacity to Hold Powerful Affect” by Candyce Ossefort-Russell, MA, LPC-S; “The Essential Sensory Integration Component to the Neurobiology of Attachment” given by Deanna Engber, OT, LPC; “Exploring the Importance of Cultivating Compassion and Altruism” by Buddhist Monk Tsetan Rinpoche; “Intimate Couple Therapy/The Dangers of Needs and Wants: How to Hold Individuals with Early Attachment Wounds within the Couple/Therapist Dyadic/Triad” by Seja Rachael MA,LPC; “Through this Window Comes the Air: Poetry as Psycho-Spiritual Practice” led by Frederick C. Bryan, MA, CAPF, LPC-I; and “Alike and Different: Relationships in Group” by systems-centered group psychotherapist Rich Armington, LCSW. The organizational team for this series of conversations included Gaea Logan, Kalila

Homann, Patty Olwell, and Cathy Weaver.

Interestingly, a variety of attendees participated including psychiatrists, healthcare professionals, educators, authors, parents and therapists. The events were consistently sold out to the point we have had to expand to a larger venue for Year of Conversations for 2010. The focus on experiential learning and process rather than the more standard left to left lecture approach seems to set this experience apart and has made it a signature event for our organization. The community looks forward to this unique learning opportunity to be able to integrate both the knowledge and the experience together with a group of their colleagues.

Austin in Connection members are also continuing their association with researchers at the University of Texas such as Debby Jacobvitz PhD, seeking funding for an attachment intervention project. We also plan to provide future training in the Adult Attachment Interview and clinical applications in the coming year. Finally, a three-day series on movement and integrated neurobiology by Kalila Homann is on the books for the Spring 2010.

As we watch our community mobilize around the principles of interpersonal neurobiology, particularly finding ways to support family health, we are heartened to be making a difference here. We hope you will join us in creating your own unique groups and becoming affiliates of GAINS!