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Special Needs Assistants Group Seminar

Understanding and Managing Challenging Behaviour

Kirsten Conroy

Kirsten is a graduate from Trinity College, Dublin, and has worked as a behavioural specialist for over 15 years with children with special needs and challenging behaviours. She lectures for the School of Progressive Education and Kildare VEC in Special Needs Assistants Skills. She also provides home tuition for children with Autism, and has advised schools on managing challenging behaviour and bullying.

Kirsten's presentation will cover such topics as:

- The psychology behind behaviours
- Antecedents, behaviour, consequences and motivators
- Measuring behaviours
- The role of Self- esteem

Karen Lowther

Karen has been teaching in a school for children with Emotional and Behavioural Disturbance and children with ASD for over 15 years. She has had extensive experience in the implementation of TEACCH and structured teaching, IABA, ABA, Multi-sensory integration and DIR Floortime in the classroom. She has been involved in adult education for many years through presentations at seminars, conferences and workshops.

Karen's presentation will cover such topics as:

- Defining Challenging behaviour
- Understanding a major behavioural event
- Supporting positive behaviour in the school and classroom
- Recent publications on Challenging Behaviour and resources

Maria Dollard

Maria has had 15 years experience in adult education and currently works with Kilkenny VEC where she is a tutor on Childcare and Healthcare courses, including Special Needs and Disability Studies. For the past eight years Maria has served on the Board of Directors of the Irish Society for Autism, and was instrumental in setting up the first Autism Support Group in Kilkenny in 1999.

Maria will conduct a workshop on the writing of Social Stories as an aid to promoting positive behaviour, and aimed at improving social skills and social understanding in children with ASD.

Bernadette O'Neill

Bernadette O'Neill works as an adult education tutor in many areas, including healthcare, literacy, and holistic health. With a background in nursing she has also worked for a number of years as manager of the Carers Association for the Carlow/ Kilkenny region. She is qualified in Reflexology, Kinesiology, Educational Kinesiology, Reiki and Bio-Energy therapy. She also works in the areas of diet and nutrition, personal development, and stress management.

Bernadette's presentation will examine:

- Stress in the workplace
- Managing Stress
- Practical relaxation techniques



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Dynamics for the adult supporting Young People with Challenging Behaviour

Whenever we operate in a close role where we support people who may present with behavioural difficulties, we do not realise that a lot of transference and projection can take place. It is of great importance that the person offering the support is aware of how to protect themselves in this environment.

My presentation is about giving people those skills.

“I spent most of my working life based in New York working for the United Nations and working in the main with American Soldiers and their families all over the world in highly stressful combat missions from Afghanistan to Iraq, from Central Africa, to Bosnia.”

Fergus Heffernan is a psychologist of many years experience of working in the areas of stress management and its impact on the working environment. Through his work with the Irish Defence Forces he was instrumental in the development and implementation of a Personnel Support Service which is widely regarded nationally and internationally as a model of best practice in the area of Employee Wellbeing programme delivery. Fergus has worked in many of the most troubled parts of the world delivering programmes on stress management and training as well as the provision of Critical Incident Stress Debriefing to soldiers working in highly stressed battleground operations. He is visiting lecturer at Trinity College Dublin as well as a visiting professor at Columbia University, New York and Boston University in the USA .

Contact details

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