

## **Baby Massage Course Brief Report.**

Tina and Shad's arrival in Thailand was straight forward and without difficulty in the pick up and the accommodation was deemed comfortable and practical. After a morning of resting, Tina and Shad met the heads of Bann Feung Fah and then visited the orphanage before the course commenced.

### **Day One**

The course started with participants signing in and receiving their course packs. All were pleased with the content and looked through the manual with great interest.



The course was opened by the Superintendent with the room setup for a formal meeting. The speech thanked Tina for coming to share her knowledge and me as representative of 1Step2Step for providing them with such an opportunity.

The tables were then moved round into a U shape as requested by Tina with space for all. This gave a friendly feel and an open forum nature to the atmosphere. Tina was quite keen that the participants felt able to ask questions and see the examples of practise. This made a perfect space in the middle for practical working sessions.



Tina presented each member participant with a small gift (golden heart stone in a bag) and greeted each person, as she was aware they were a little shy at the beginning.

The first part started with the staff being asked what they thought the value of massage for infants would be. This gave a chance for the staff to write down their thoughts. They were keen but quiet when discussing and giving feedback. During the first question time the staff didn't choose to speak up much but Tina had expected this. The translator Sunanta encouraged them to ask questions at anytime.



The staff were a mix of physiotherapists, teachers, ward staff with some students studying psychology. The feedback from the groups showed they had knowledge of massage but they genuinely seemed interested to hear that massage had so many benefits for the child and person giving the massage.

The afternoon of the first day was when the baby massage dolls were introduced. Everyone got one and sat down on the mats. Tina took everyone through the full

body strokes. The staff watched as she showed the moves on a doll and Tina clarified the important things like eye contact, smiles and talking to baby. They watched and listened intently. Many of the participants copied Tina's hand movements on their dolls and often staff were seen adding extra notes on their manual.



During the second question and answer time, the staff were warming to Tina and asked more questions. They were told they could take the dolls and manual home if they wanted to practice or read the manual again.

### Day Two

The staff arrived enthusiastic and on time, keen to learn more. You could see many were talking about how the strokes and checking they were doing it right with fellow participants.

The morning started off with going over the strokes and a question and answer time for thoughts they had had overnight. Tina spent time making sure everyone had the correct hand movements making sure they could all see

her example. They had already at this point started to get used to the routine and order of the strokes.



After the morning break Tina introduced some new and fun ways to do the massage and to get the participants to feel the pressure and how pleasant it was. The staff all sat in a circle and massaged the person in front of them. Tina sat in the middle directing the staff on how to do the back massage. A great deal of laughter and smiles were seen in this part.

Then Tina told them how you can tell stories with massage. This went down very well and Tina was pleased with their reactions.



After lunch invited parents arrived. We had 10 families in total whose children all had special needs. We had children with cerebral palsy who were high tone, low tone, athetoid, hemiplegic and quadriplegic. We had two children with Downs Syndrome and one 5 month old baby who was born 2 months prematurely. There were mums, dads, adoptive parents, foster parents, volunteers and grandparents. It was a great mix of people of all ages and walks of life.

After the parents had signed in and received the packs, Tina taught them some of the baby massage strokes and talked about the benefits while the participants watched.



The students on the course wished to put into action their new skills with hands on time with the children and so rushed off to get children from the wards. This was not part of the plan but the class carried on as more children arrived and received massage. The benefit of this was that they saw many reactions from the children. The staff went and got children who were blind, autistic and children who had clubfeet.

Those who didn't go and get children continued to practice on the dolls (which paid off on the last day when Tina watched them teach).



The session went really well with the parents smiling and interacting with their children lots. The sound of giggles and interaction were lovely. The cultural concerns of not liking feet faded as



the parents and participants engaged without hesitation.

The children had a ball and at the end of that session Tina went round and spoke to the families. They were able to ask for information relating to the needs that were specific to their child.



The parents were reminded that they were to come again the next day, but sadly this did not go according to plan.

After a short while preparing for the following days session where the participants would teach the parents the day was rounded up. Most staff took dolls and the manual home so they could go over and revise for the teaching they would give the next day.

### Day Three

The morning started with questions and answer time, which flowed well with many questions from the participants. In the morning session they learnt about the contrary indications which were the things that would prevent you from doing massage on a child. The staff were very focused and made many notes in their manuals. Tina felt this was a good session. The participants felt confident by this time to ask questions as and when they came up and could seek clarification on anything they were unsure about.

The morning went really fast and it was lunch before anyone realised. After lunch, the participants split into small groups of about 5 and had a 'family' to teach the massage strokes and information about massage too. As with the day before the parents, slowly started to arrive. Sadly we only got back 3 of the 10 families. They may either have felt there were too many people or they didn't have time but only a few attended the Friday afternoon session which left us with real difficulty.



I went off in search of people to step in as parents for this part of the course. One of the ladies in the kitchen at the orphanage has a daughter with a 9 month old baby daughter and I happened to find her. She was willing to come to the course and help us. I went to the ward and got one of the children whose mother had come previous day and pretended to be her parent for the session. On Fridays we have a polish man visit the orphanage (who has been coming for 4 years now). He is a physiotherapist and so he was invited to help us with his favourite child. The head physiotherapist also went to get a child and became a parent for this part of the course. In total we managed to gather together 6 children with an adult who they knew. Although it did not go exactly to plan, there were still good opportunities for learning to take place.



Tina was pleased with how much the staff had remembered and how confidently they had presented the information and examples of strokes to the ‘families’. The group I was with were very good as reassuring both myself and the child, about why the movements were so valuable.



We had a short break after this and then it was time for the graduation. The tables and chairs were set in rows and the staff and parents came up when called to receive their certificates. Many of the staff were very pleased with both the highly official certificate and the bright Gerbera flower.

In total there were 31 participants, physiotherapists, ward staff, teachers and others including three staff from CCD. They were invited by Bann Feung Fah to attend the



course.

After all the staff were presented with their certificates, we gave the parents a certificate of attendance. We had two special secret ones to give out too. One was for the translator Sunanta who had so kindly stepped in at the last moment and travelled all the way from Chaing Mai, overnight, for the first day of the course. She expressed how much she had enjoyed the course and learnt so much. Tina and I agreed that she should receive a certificate too. She was so surprised when her name was called.

Throughout the three day course one of the children had been concentrating, listening and being practiced on. We decided that he should receive a certificate of attendance too. He came up to receive it from Tina independently only needing a little help to stand still for the photograph.

Finally we had a speech from the head of Bann Feung Fah and a group photo of all involved in the course.

