

Attachment and Emotional Communication

A Framework for Change
with Dr Wendy Kelly



Children and young people who need love the most often ask for it in the most unloving ways. Young people with disrupted attachment, traumatic backgrounds and experiences of neglect or separation crave care and connection, but emotionally communicate this with mistrust and aggression, often rejecting those who are trying to support them.

This seminar explores attachment theory through a developmental lens, discussing how children of different ages negotiate the tasks of attachment relationships, both when things go well and when children are affected by adverse events. The role of attachment in helping children regulate their emotions and cope with stress will be discussed, along with how children perceive both psychological safety and threat, using polyvagal theory.

Some of the key themes that Wendy will discuss during this day long workshop will include:

- The ways that disrupted attachment and traumatic stress change the way that children view themselves and others, often longing for connection but acting in ways that push people away.
- Aspects of contemporary life such as parent use of cell phones, gender roles, non-western views and the impact of social conditions such as poverty and racism on the development of attachment will also be covered.
- Wendy will use her own model, the Relational Learning Framework, to show how the young person's past adverse experiences can create a negative view of themselves and the people around them e.g. that they are unlovable and that parents hurt you and leave you.
- How this framework can help parents, educators and therapists to provide the child with the corrective experiences of trust and connection they need and to put these into words to help the child develop a more positive view of themselves and others.
- The importance of adult self-regulation and the influence of our own attachment style
- Ideas for working with people with different attachment styles and ways to encourage more effective emotional communication.



Dr Wendy Kelly is a Clinical Practice Advisor with the Clinical Psychology program at Victoria University. She is the author of 'Understanding Children in Foster Care' and completed her PhD on the topic 'Looking after children in care: What psychological factors affect the foster parent-child relationship?'. She also runs a private practice and provides supervision and consultation services for professionals working in the area of child maltreatment and trauma. She has worked in the child protection and mental health fields for over 30 years. Wendy has developed this new workshop to reflect the significant amount of new research and knowledge in this field of practice. Wendy's engaging and interactive presentation style combined with her contemporary knowledge and practice wisdom in this topic area mean this workshop is a must for all professionals who engage with children in their work.

Tour Details:

- 📍 **AUCKLAND:** 8 October 2025, Naumi Hotel Auckland Airport
- 📍 **HAMILTON:** 29 October 2025, Novotel Tainui Hamilton
- 🕒 9:00am - 3:00pm
- 💰 \$310 (incl. GST). Price includes lunch and tea break catering and presentation notes
- ❓ Contact the Compass Seminars team on 06 7591947 or office@compass.ac.nz

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