

ACE Advice



Practical Experience | Expert Insight

A Virtual Chat with Melissa Fellin



MA Anthropology
PhD Sociocultural
Anthropology
Master of Social Work
Registered Social Worker



MA Western University
PhD Western University
MSW Wilfrid Laurier
University



Specialty/Research Focus:
PhD work focused on
Somali refugee youth,
collecting and analyzing
stories of their migrations
and subsequent
experiences.

Melissa is a socio-cultural anthropologist and registered social worker who provides psychotherapy to children, youth and adults.

During Melissa's fieldwork within Somali refugee communities, she accumulated many hours of volunteer work – essentially, offering to do whatever the community members wanted her to do, as a way to give back to the community rather than just record their stories.

After her post-doctoral fellowship, Melissa realized that what she likes most about anthropology is working with a community, learning about people's lives, thinking about people's strengths, and their resiliency – and contributing positively to their lives.

Melissa's husband is a social worker, so she knew enough about the profession to know that it would make a good career for her. With this in mind, she went back to school for a Master of Social Work, received additional training in therapy, as well as the practicalities of practicing therapy, and is currently training to be a certified play therapist.

While the MSW degree was necessary for practicing psychotherapy for Melissa, she found that there were gaps in the training. Her training in Anthropology gave Melissa understandings of colonialism, power, thinking about relationships, sexuality, and gender - all of which gave her a better perspective to relate to psychotherapy clients, and helped her to work in terms of theory, models, social constructions of systems and cultures, and human behaviour, which were all things not taught in MSW courses.

Her understanding of biology and primate behaviour has also been helpful in her current role, allowing her to relate aggression in non-human primate behaviour and group dynamics to human children and aggression. Children's rights, the power differential between adults and children, and children having a voice – are all important concepts learned from her anthropology work that are still present in the work she does now. Melissa feels that she would not be as successful at connecting to her clients without her anthropology background – indeed, she says that anthropology shapes everything she does now.

Currently, Melissa is working as the Clinical Director/ Owner of Bloom: Child & Family Therapy providing play therapy to children. She also works as a individual and relationship therapist at Bliss Counselling and Psychotherapy. Networking was key in getting Melissa where she is today: Melissa met the founder and director of Bliss, through a networking event of psychotherapists in the Waterloo Region. Another friend, an owner of a thriving practice, had asked if she would like to attend. Melissa put herself out there after meeting Kelly at the networking event, saying she would love to be able to work at her practice. After one meeting, Kelly took on Melissa as one of her psychotherapists.

After about 2 years working with adults and couples, Melissa decided to pursue her interest in working with children. She opened a home-based private practice office for children while still working at Bliss. Kelly has now helped Melissa to open up a group practice for children and families called Bloom: Child & Family Therapy in Waterloo.

Online
Office Hrs



See our list of
events to register
for Melissa's
upcoming office
hours.