



Becoming Us Professional Training Overview

Instructor: Elly Taylor

Elly Taylor is an internationally recognised perinatal relationship specialist, author and founder of Becoming Us. Elly has served on the advisory panels for several university research projects: the Australian Catholic University's Supporting Your Partner When You Have a Baby, Monash University's Emotional Experiences of Early Parenthood and Newcastle University's innovative SMS for Dads. Elly is currently on the advisory board for the UK charity International Forum for Wellbeing in Pregnancy. Elly's award-winning book *Becoming Us, The Couple's Guide to Surviving Parenthood* has been endorsed in North America by CAPP (The Childbirth and Postpartum Professional Association) and her live training has been approved by Postpartum Support International.

Course Overview

BECOMING US Level I – Foundation Skills (Tilling the Soil and Planting the Seeds)

Session 1: Loving

We'll start with a brief theory of infant and adult attachment and why the perinatal period is also ripe for structuring a more secure bond between *adult partners*. We'll also look at relationship dynamics and how they change during the perinatal period. You'll learn the three stages of a long-term relationship life cycle: Coming Together, Growing Apart and Growing Together and how to facilitate your clients' moving through the stages.

Session 2: Learning

You'll learn why the term "the transition into parenthood" is a misnomer - parenthood involves multiple transitions. In defining these, you may discover new ways to work with your clients, expand your services or collaborative opportunities. We'll start to peel back the layers of "the way we work", giving you more insight into your clients (and perhaps yourself!). We'll also look at stress and coping - and how you can support your clients to do less of the former and more of the latter.

Session 3: Growing

You'll discover new research into neuroplasticity which gives us exciting clues as to how to better prepare expecting couples for the parenthood adventure. You'll learn Erik Erikson's stages of development and how they apply to children, adults and especially to parents and why some parents may be able to cope more than others. You'll be introduced to the theory of Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy, the function of emotions and why parenthood is the perfect time to become more emotionally intelligent. You'll learn G.R.O.W.T.H. seeds to plant for clients.

Session 4: Relating

You'll learn (and get to practice) the skills of intimate communication, a simple, direct, trusting and vulnerable style of relating that can change relationship DNA. You'll learn a model of conflict



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resolution, which you can apply to any relationship and we'll also look at the psychology of apology and an approach that won't just improve the situation, but your client's whole relationship.

BECOMING US Level II – Eight Stages of Early Parenthood

Session Five: Stage 1 - Prenatal Preparation

We call it “expecting” but expecting is a huge waste of time and a lost opportunity, we really should start calling it “preparing” instead. You’ll learn what to prepare your clients for and how to prepare them. If you’re working with clients who are trying to conceive or adopting, they will have more time to prepare. You’ll learn what the big issues are for expecting mamas, papas and partners, how to work with their (possibly unrealistic) expectations to reduce their risk for Postpartum Depression and Anxiety, and how to open the lines of communication around sensitive topics.

Session Six: Stage 2 - Nest Building

Couples often prepare a birth plan, but birth is just the beginning. The postpartum period, the fourth trimester, is pivotal for all members of a new family. Learn how to help your clients set themselves up for the best start.

Session Seven: Stage 3 - Adjusting Expectations

In a Beyondblue poll, 30% of Australian mothers said unrealistic expectations of life and love post-baby contributed to their Postnatal/Postpartum Depression. Learn how to gently tease out and adjust expectations to support coping.

Session Eight: Stage 4 - Setting Up Base Camp

In this stage we apply Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs especially to new parents. This stage prepares couples for the challenges that will unfold over the next few years. Learn what mothers, fathers and partners need so they can best meet the needs of their baby and toddler. When times get tough, families can return at any time to base camp and recuperate.

Session Nine: Stage 5 - Embracing Emotions

And supporting your clients to embrace theirs! Parenthood is a time of increased emotional vulnerability. Use your new knowledge of the main function of emotions from Level I to embrace this and you can support your clients' mental, emotional and relationship wellbeing. Create stronger bonds in all their relationships through emotional connection, understanding and empathy.

Session Ten: Stage 6 - Identity and Self-Esteem

Most parents expect aspects of life to change after baby, but most don’t expect parenthood to change aspects of *themselves*. Many mothers are blindsided by the social demotion of motherhood and the unexpected drop in self-esteem. On the other hand, research tells us fathers self-esteem rises with fatherhood – unless they’re criticised by their partner. Learn how to support your clients to embrace the changes and use parenthood as a time of self-discovery, self-acceptance or reinvention.



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Session Eleven: Stage 7 - Growing Together through Differences

According to landmark research by Cowan and Cowan, a whopping 92% of couples report increased conflict in the first year after baby. It's easy to see why - sleep deprivation will do that to anyone! New parents have a laundry list of issues to deal with - financial concerns, changes in goals, roles and priorities, troubles with extended family, daily stressors, overcrowded lives and pressured lifestyles, lack of self-care, new disagreements and failing communication. These issues can bring most new families undone. You will know how managing these issues can bring your couples closer, instead of sending them apart.

Session Twelve: Stage 8 - Connecting and Reconnecting

According to research by Gottman and Gottman, 67% of couples report declined relationship satisfaction in the first three years of family. In my counselling experience this is because parenthood issues have come between them - and they have become disconnected from each other. I also believe this disconnection is linked to findings from the Murdoch Children's Research Institute that mothers are reporting more symptoms of Postnatal/Postpartum Depression when their eldest child is age 4. You will learn how to keep couples connected at different levels - mentally, emotionally, sensually and sexually - through all the stages!

BECOMING US Level III – Extra Support for the Extra Hard Stuff

Session Thirteen: Birth Trauma, Grief, Depression and Anxiety

One in six mamas suffer from Postpartum Depression as do one in 10 dads. New research from Australia indicates that Postpartum Anxiety is proving to be more prevalent, with 33% of mamas and 17% of dads reporting symptoms. A traumatic birth increases the risk for both perinatal mood disorders and relationship breakdown. New research is also (finally!) confirming what Relationship Counsellors and Therapists have experienced for years – that trauma and perinatal mood disorders are both related to couple bonding. You'll know the signs and symptoms for both mothers and fathers, how to reduce the risks and promote coping for your clients.

Session Fourteen: Affairs, Addiction and Abuse

It's a tragic fact that pregnancy and early parenthood can be a time of increased risk for affairs, addiction and abuse. Twenty-five percent of Australian women experienced domestic violence for the first time during pregnancy. In the U.S., substance abuse is more common among women of childbearing age - and partners - than the general population. You'll know the main reasons for this and how to reduce the risk for your clients. And for those who have already experienced it, there is hope even when clients have hit rock bottom. You'll have more awareness about the worst of times, so you and your clients have more appreciation of the best of them.