

EVALUATION TOOL 17:	OBSERVATIONS		
OVERVIEW:	<p>Observations (e.g. Attachment Patterns)</p> <p>Observing participants on a course can yield vital information. The course can be observed without any preconceived items, but this leads to difficulties with choosing what to record. Most observations use an observation schedule which is populated with key themes or items from the research question. The observation is only the reality of the observer – it does not necessarily represent the truth. The example here is attachment patterns, but you could use any other theme.</p> <p>The advantages of unobtrusive observation are that it uses direct and first-hand observation rather than second-hand reporting and it doesn't affect the behaviour under study, and so is good for looking at actual rather than perceived behaviour. Another advantage is that the young people do not need to do anything – you do the work! There are some disadvantages though as the behaviour can be misinterpreted/misunderstood from 'outside' without an insider's guidance and the recording can be difficult in the situation observed.</p>		
WHAT YOU WILL NEED:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A notebook 	PREPARATION:	Decide what it is that you will observe and how you will record it.
PROCESS:	<p>Step 1: Define the variables under observation – what do you want to look at/measure, and how will you recognise it?</p> <p>Step 2: Design a simple form or list of criteria that you are looking for.</p> <p>Step 3: Let the young person know what you are noting down and why (in appropriate terms).</p> <p>Step 4: Carry out the observations and make notes.</p> <p>Common mistakes in observations include attempting to observe too many variables at once; not taking note of the effect of your observation on the young people's behaviour, and relying too much on (possibly faulty) memory.</p> <p>Most of our evaluation tools to date have involved listening to the young people's voices. This tool gives your voice importance, asking what you notice about the young people.</p> <p>Carrying this out before and after a course can help you to demonstrate that your developmental work has paid off (i.e. the young people demonstrate more secure attachments.)</p>		
ANALYSIS:	Comparison of observation 1 with observation 2 shows the changes that have been achieved or not. This comparison would be made for every intended outcome, and the notes checked for any unintended outcomes.		
EXAMPLE:	See checklist below.		
STRENGTHS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instant • Informal 	WEAKNESSES:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all staff are confident to do this