

Topic Explorer for: *'Stories of Psychological Practice from Neonatal Care'*

Exploring Yourself and Your Relationship with Work

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We have written these Topic Explorers to aid deeper reflection, exploration and learning about some of the themes in the book *'Stories of Psychological Practice from Neonatal Care'*. This Topic Explorer should be read alongside the "Read-Along Guide", another of the extra resources accompanying the book. The read-along guide provides some introductory prompts to begin exploring your responses to the stories in the book, and also shares some ideas for practical activities that can support your reflective practice as an individual or as part of a group. This Topic Explorer focuses on themes related to exploring yourself and your relationship with work. This includes professional identity and belonging, as well as self-care and the impact your work has on your wellbeing.

Exploring professional identity

The stories in *Stories of Psychological Practice from Neonatal Care* were written in response to the question "Who am I and what work am I doing here?" It is of little surprise, then, that many of the chapters address the theme of identity. The following questions invite you to think about your own personal and professional identity, focusing on some of the key dilemmas and challenges illustrated in the stories. In particular, you might find it helpful to read chapters 7, 9, 25, 26, 32, 37, 40, 41, 42, 46 and 49 of the book when considering these questions.

Who am I?

1. How do you think and feel about your work?
2. How do you make sense of your role? What does it mean to you?
3. How many different hats do you wear in your role? What is that like?

What you bring and what you take

4. How do your personal life experiences impact on your approach to work?
5. How have you changed through working in neonatal care?
6. Are there overlaps between your life and the lives of those you support (babies, families, colleagues)? If so, what is that like?



Exploring professional belonging

For humans, as social creatures, experiences of belonging are foundational to our wellbeing. If we feel that we belong, we feel safe, grounded and able to offer our support to others. If we feel that we do not belong, we feel isolated, threatened and it is hard to focus on the needs of others. This is no more so than at work, where a sense of belonging is fundamental – for most – to our ability to function. The theme of belonging is a focus of a number of chapter in *Stories of Psychological Practice from Neonatal Care*, including chapters 6, 30, 31, 34. The following questions encourage you to consider your own sense of belonging and related experiences.

1. Where do you gain your sense of belonging in work?
2. What gets in the way of belonging?
3. How do you integrate into a team, whilst holding onto your unique contribution?
4. How does trust grow in your relationships at work?
5. How does collaboration work in your setting? What gets and keeps it going? What gets in the way?

Exploring self-care and the impact of your work

Working in neonatal care is hard, and at times it hurts. Much of *Stories of Psychological Practice from Neonatal Care* is concerned with the question of how we can continue to show up with presence in this work, even when it might be eroding our wellbeing, or sense of self. The following questions invite you to reflect on how you sustain yourself in your neonatal work. In particular, you might find it helpful to read chapters 5, 39, 44, 45, 47, 48 and 50 of the book when considering these questions.

1. What toll does your work take on your mind, body and self?
2. How do you manage the impact of the work on you?
3. What might help you bear the suffering of another person?
4. From where do you draw courage to continue returning to this intense workplace?
5. One of the most corrosive ideas to our wellbeing is the idea that we are “not good enough.” How might you hold onto the idea of being “good enough” in the face of feelings of self-doubt, inadequacy or imposter syndrome?

