

My career: Debbie Hegarty: Psychotherapist

Name: Debbie Hegarty

Age: 46 this year.

Lives: Cork city

Job title: Psychotherapist

Salary Bracket: Pay is dependant upon your client base. A full-time psychotherapist can earn between €30-45,000.

Education background: BA (Hons) in Social Science, UCC; BA Arts (Hons) in Psychotherapy & Counselling, CIT; Diploma in Psychotherapy, ISAT; Certificate in Reality Therapy/Choice Theory/Lead Management, WGii; Cert in Gestalt Psychotherapy.

Hobbies: Travelling, politics, non-fiction books.

Therapist Debbie is ready to listen

Describe your job in five words: Challenging, fascinating, diverse, worthwhile, valuable.

Describe yourself in five words: Assured, honourable, pragmatic, intelligent, calm.

Personality needed for this kind of work? It is very important in this type of work to have good judgement. You would also need to have an ability to listen and respond to others with compassion and respect; have the capacity for in-depth self-reflection and a commitment to self-development.

Non-maleficence (do no harm), beneficence (work for the greater good), autonomy (self-directed) and interdependence (mutual reliance) and fidelity (trustworthiness) are all important principles to adhere to.

How long are you doing this job? Five years.

How did you get this job? I used to work in hotels. I returned to college as a mature student while still in full-time employment. I intentionally waited until that time in my life to pursue my goal to become a psychotherapist because I wanted to dedicate myself to my three children first. Flexibility within my work, as well as on-going support from my husband, allowed for what ended up as 10 years in training.

Initially, I worked on a voluntary basis in a school and for relevant agencies to gain the experience required, until a paid position became available. The first salaried employment I held was within the mental health services in a residential therapeutic community setting in north Cork.

Currently I work at The Hazelton Clinic in the Ardfallen Medical Centre in Douglas. This is a dedicated counselling centre and the first of its kind in Ireland. We work with

individuals, couples, families and groups in areas such as addiction, anxiety, panic, phobias, bereavement, depression/trauma and life coaching.

Do you need particular qualifications/experience? In order to practice you need to complete of a psychotherapy training of at least four years duration, to include 100 hours of personal therapy. Once qualified, it is important to work toward accreditation with a governing body. You must achieve a post-graduate level of competence comprising of at least 600 hours of supervised contact with clients. I am an accredited member of two governing bodies, namely IACP and IAHIP.

Describe an average day at work: I am an early riser and whether I am beginning at 9am or later, I give myself time for a hot breakfast.

Each session lasts one hour and I aim not to book in more than four sessions of counselling per day. I also leave some time between sessions for note-taking. I find having good time-management skills reduces potential stress. It also allows me to stay fully present to all my clients, whether they are the first or last session of my day.

I attempt to work around my client's requirements in terms of availability, which can often mean I am in the clinic from morning through to evening. On occasion this can materialise into a long day.

Due to the uniqueness of each client, as well as the range of issues I work with, no two sessions are ever the same. This diversity keeps me motivated and energised.

How many hours do you work a week? I work anything up to 20 hours per week. As the clinic's office manager, I am also required to do at least 20 hours of administration.

What do you wear to work? I usually wear something comfortable and formal.

Is your industry male or female dominated? It appears to be female-dominated.

Does this affect you in any particular way? No.

Is your job stressful? How? I have always been aware of the importance of self-care in order to be a competent practitioner, otherwise you can become stressed and end up burned-out. I avoid stress by getting good night's sleep, eating well and taking appropriate time-out.

Do you work with others or on your own? Both. I am on my own when doing individual and couple counselling but am normally with colleagues when facilitating groups.

In addition, we meet regularly for staff meetings as well as group supervision. To ensure my practice remains effective and appropriate, I am obliged to meet regularly with a supervisor, to review my work.

Connectedness has always been important to me. In the early days of practising, I rented a room in the city centre and worked alone with clients. At the end of a day, if I struggled with feelings of isolation or inadequacy, I would have to hold onto these uncertainties until my next session of individual supervision. It is not the kind of profession that allows for disclosure with family and friends. This is what motivated me to work at a counselling centre.

When do you plan to retire or give up working? When I am no longer able to work competently.

Best bits: When I witness my client develop the capacity for self-determination and blossom into the person they always had the potential to be.

Worst bits: For me it is when a



Psychotherapist Debbie Hegarty at work in the Hazelton Clinic, a dedicated counselling centre.

Picture: Ger Bonus

client ends the therapy suddenly without explanation and adequate closure.

Advice to those who want your job? Ask yourself are you ready to begin what will most likely become a life-long journey of self-reflection and on-going professional development. This is a highly responsible job because you meet people at their

most vulnerable and offer them a impartial helping relationship. Maturity and integrity are imperative.

Any other comments? Friends and family tell me I have changed significantly since I chose this career path. These changes sometimes posed problems for me in relationships. But I have never felt so alive and worthwhile.

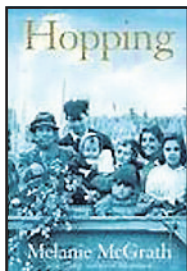
WOW! Books

Hopping, by Melanie McGrath. Fourth Estate.

The sequel to the bestselling *Silvertown*, which tells the story of Aunt Daisy and all the other locals of the old East End.

For more than a century, hopping was the main event in the East End calendar — an annual expedition of more than 200,000 Eastenders out to the Kentish countryside to look for casual work picking hops and stripping bines. Aunt Daisy was one of those day-trippers. Her delicate demeanour had never really suited the smutty terraces of the East End; rather she considered herself a countrywoman who just so happened to be stranded in the city. Married young and yet not unhappily to Harold Baker, a closet homosexual who would never consummate their union, at some early point she wrote an escape clause into her life that shielded her from reality.

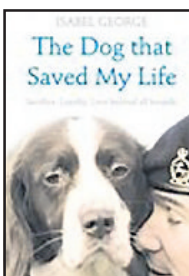
Aimee Gallagher



The Dog That Saved My Life, by Isabel George. Harper Element.

For as long as dogs have lived alongside man, they have saved their lives in wartime with their bravery, loyalty and companionship. From the Second World War dog that was adopted by the Royal Navy as a mascot, torpedoed, shot at and registered as a prisoner of war; to the more recent heroics of explosives dog Sadie in the Afghanistan conflict where she saved hundreds of military and civilian lives, this is a collection of the most incredible and heartwarming accounts from around the world. It captures the fear, uncertainty, determination and undying devotion of these amazing dogs and the young soldiers, sailors and airmen they befriended. These are truly inspirational tales of loyalty and companionship beyond all boundaries.

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