

Helen Downey CV

Full Names: Helen Margaret Downey (née Selfe)

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Date and place of birth: 29th May 1946 in Oxford, UK

Family: Parents: John and Thelma Selfe, both deceased. Husband, Mike, married in 1967. Children: Eric (born 1968, married to Katharine, no children) Aidan (born 1969) Matthew (born 1972 married to Lucy, one son, Sam born 2010)

Education: British Forces School, Cologne (Germany) then briefly, Pinelands Primary School, Cape before St. Mary's DSG, Pretoria and 2 years at The School of St. Helen and St. Katharine, Abingdon, Berkshire, UK, finishing back at St. Mary's where I matriculated in 1962.

1963-1967 Pretoria University and then Onderstepoort. Qualified in 1967 with B.V.Sc., earning the Clinical medal that year.

Career: January 1968-May 1973 Worked in partnership with my husband in our own private veterinary practice.

May 1973 – May 1977 Worked on the rehabilitation of our son, Aidan, who has a rare genetic syndrome. This consisted of a daily 8 hour plus programme of physical exercises and intellectual stimulation. We had by this time emigrated to the UK and were living in Wales. It was due to the progress that he made as a result of this, that decided us to change the direction of our professional lives.

May 1977 – July 1979 Worked at the Institute for the Achievement of Human Potential, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, first as a parent of a disabled child and then as a staff member. I helped to set up a preschool based on the Institutes philosophy. I taught preschoolers and before that, young adults with learning difficulties.

December 1979 – April 2003 Created with my husband and a colleague, and then worked for St. Briavels Centre for Child Development, once the latter became a Charity in 1989. This was a Charity which taught parents of children with brain damage and other learning disabilities how to maximise the abilities of each child by a structured home based programme of exercises. My job entailed taking detailed histories, evaluating and measuring the children and then working out the intellectual, manual and sound therapy aspects of their home treatment programmes. I also worked with children who had more minor learning difficulties, but who had retained primitive reflexes.

We started with British families, but as word spread, we saw children from South Africa, France, Germany, Italy, Austria, Lebanon, Senegal, among other countries.

April 2003 – December 2008 I worked in partnership with my husband for Brain Solutions as a neurodevelopmental therapist, carrying on the work that I did for St. Briavels Centre. As well as working with individual children and their families, we ran workshops in rural and periurban areas in South Africa, where we taught carers of disabled children simple therapy techniques that they could carry out at home or in care centres.

Other qualifications:

July 1986 Montessori Gold Seal Diploma with distinction – Nursery (2 ½ - 6 years)

July 1988 Montessori Gold Seal Diploma with distinction – Primary (6 -12 years)

September 1988 – October 2000 Course Tutor for London Montessori Centre for Preprimary Distance Learning Course.

October 2000 – Mid 2009 Course Tutor for Montessori Centre International for Special Educational Needs Distance Learning Course.

July 1992 Trained at the Institute for Neuro-Physiological Psychology in Chester, UK as a neurodevelopmental therapist. I was trained to assess retained primitive reflexes in bright children who were struggling at school.

July 1998 Samonas Sound Therapy course

October 1999 Johansen Sound Therapy course. Regular yearly update courses until 2012.

2000. ARROW course for children with dyslexia and reading and spelling difficulties.

April and June 2003 and autumn 2004 Brain Gym courses, which work on the integration of both sides of the brain.

November 2004 Bilateral Integration course and follow up in 2008

July 2005 Picture Exchange Communication System course, to help non verbal children communicate.

Regular first aid courses

1999-2005 Member of the Developmental Practitioners Association and its treasurer from 2001 - 2005. This is a group of practitioners who work mainly with children with scholastic difficulties. The 4 meetings a year would each consist of in house training or outside speakers who share their knowledge.

Activities outside the profession:

Travel, mainly in Europe but also in Southern Africa and the Far East.

Learning to speak French (fairly fluent), Italian and German.

Gardening, especially growing our own vegetables.

Volunteering for various things in and around the village, and a weekly shift in a Community shop and café.

Dog walking group

Knitting and cross stitch