An Introduction to Balint Work
A One Day workshop with John Barton and Adrienne Ackermann

Sunday 15th March 9:30 am to 4:00 pm

Adrienne Ackermann and John Barton are delighted to offer this Balint workshop to colleagues in Christchurch.

Balint groups are a form of reflective practice in which clinicians meet to present cases and reflect on the nature of the clinician-client (doctor-patient) relationship. Balint groups offer a safe and supportive setting to explore difficult or intriguing interactions. We welcome psychotherapists, psychologists, counsellors, chaplains, nurses, GPs, psychiatrists and other clinical workers on the workshop. People in training are also welcome.

Balint groups
Balint groups are named after Hungarian born psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, Michael Balint and his wife Enid Balint a psychoanalyst and social worker who, working at the Tavistock Clinic with in the 1950s, developed a unique method for understanding the GP-patient relationship. This method has been refined over the past fifty years and there are now many groups in UK, Europe and USA and a growing number in NZ and Australia.

Balint work is still mainly found among GPs. However, especially in Europe and now in Australia and New Zealand, it is becoming a common form of peer supervision in many professions.

This workshop will have a mixture of professions attending. A number of workshops of this nature have been run in New Zealand in the last five years and have proven very successful. Several people who have attended these workshops have joined ongoing Balint groups and a few are considering becoming Balint leaders and offering such groups.

This workshop will be experiential: The way a Balint group works will be clearly explained and then cases will be presented and discussed in this way. There will also be the opportunity to reflect upon and ask questions about the Balint process.

Leaders: Adrienne is an experienced GP in Christchurch and has led a Balint group for GPs.

John is an accredited psychodramatist, psychotherapist and Balint leader living in Auckland. He is a retired general practitioner. He is a past president of the Balint Society of Australia and New Zealand and has been a convener of Balint leadership training workshops in Australia and New Zealand.

Please come for the whole day. The workshop will start at 9:30 am and finish at 4:30 pm with about an hour lunch break. We will have a maximum of eight participants.
For more information (and reading material) concerning Balint groups and this workshop please contact: John Barton phone 09 634 1916 or email john@johnbarton.net.nz or Adrienne Ackermann, phone 021 0257 4457 or email adrienne.ackermann@xtra.co.nz.

**Venue:** The Bealey Centre, 93 Bealey Avenue, Christchurch.

**Cost:** $100.00 per person - includes morning and afternoon teas. We plan to find a local cafe for lunch together.

**To register** please contact John at john@johnbarton.net.nz. The usual cost of such a workshop is $160.00. We are offering it at this rate by way of acknowledging our colleagues in Christchurch.

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**A Description of Balint work**

Balint groups offer the opportunity for health professionals to reflect upon difficult or intriguing cases, with a focus on the clinician-client (or doctor-patient) relationship. The leaders facilitate this process and do not act as experts. Their task is to hold the structure of the Balint group so that it is a safe and supportive setting for the participants.

The participants will be invited to present cases where they have experienced a strong reaction such as distress, delight, frustration or uncertainty. The case is presented briefly and informally, with the emphasis on the nature of the clinician-client interaction and including the clinician’s feelings and reactions. The group members then discuss the case, again focussing on the relationship rather than the client’s clinical material.

The group is asked to empathize with both the clinician's and the client’s experience and to speculate about what thoughts and feelings each might be having. Diverse views often emerge, reflecting the group members’ varied personalities and experiences. All ideas are allowed to “exist in the room” and there is no attempt to reach a “right” answer. The underlying assumption is that "the knowledge is in the group".

A Balint group is very different from the usual medical case presentation in that the members are strongly discouraged from making judgements, giving advice, or offering solutions and no attempt is made to reach a conclusion. Discussion of clinical management is actively discouraged. We assume that all the group members are competent and know how to manage their clients/patients. This structure creates a place of safety where the participants can feel comfortable discussing the uncomfortable moments in the consultation.

This way of working can be difficult at first, but once learnt is a liberating experience, stimulating deeper thought and understanding.

More information about Balint work can be found on the websites of various Balint societies around the world:

- The Balint Society (U.K.): [www.balint.co.uk](http://www.balint.co.uk).