Course: applying polyvagal principles to help clients build nervous system resilience

Address:
https://asadis.net/en/course/applying-polyvagal-principles-help-clients-building-nervous-system-resilience/

Duration: 5h

Type of course: Continuing education

Location: Online course

Individual price: $200.00

Overview:
Polyvagal Theory has often been called “the science of safety”—an apt description, as a sense of safety is essential for us to thrive, love, and fully engage in life. Yet many clients struggle to find and maintain this foundational sense of security. By illuminating the ways our autonomic nervous system shifts among mobilization, disconnection, and engagement, Polyvagal Theory offers vital psychological and physiological insights. These insights inform more effective strategies for treating trauma, addressing relational challenges, and improving mood disorders.

This workshop will show you how to apply Polyvagal Theory in clinical practice, providing a comprehensive approach to intervention. You will learn to recognize clients’ autonomic responses and, crucially, how to help them re-pattern those responses to support an enduring sense of safety. Through experiential exercises and guided worksheets, you will translate theory into actionable interventions, enhancing your capacity to foster resilience and regulation in your clients.

Key Topics Covered:

• Social Engagement: learn techniques to enhance connection and safety in therapeutic settings.
• Risks and Limitations in Clinical Practice: potential pitfalls and ethical considerations.
• Components of Secure Attachment: understand how attachment styles intersect with autonomic states.
• The Polyvagal Perspective on Trauma: learn how trauma disrupts autonomic functioning and gain tools to promote healing and resilience.

• Working with the Five Senses: incorporate sensory-based interventions to help clients anchor in safety and regulation.
• Readdressing the Somatic Narrative: support clients in identifying, understanding, and transforming the narratives stored in their bodies.
• How to Tone the Vagal Nerve: discover practical exercises and lifestyle adjustments that strengthen vagal tone, enhancing self-regulation.
• A Somatic Psychotherapy Framework: integrate these approaches within a broader somatic psychotherapy model to create holistic and client-centered interventions.

By the end of this workshop, you will have a toolkit of Polyvagal-informed strategies that foster emotional safety, enrich therapeutic relationships, and support clients in building lasting resilience.

Learning objectives:

1. Assess for vagal system states and related behaviors
2. Demonstrate strategies designed to help clients to identify, accept, and tolerate vagal system states
3. Employ Polyvagal informed strategies from mindfulness and other mental health treatments to establish greater vagal system resiliency
4. Discuss how to recognize and repair relational disconnects in the therapeutic setting utilizing a Polyvagal informed approach

Learning material:

A theoretical course illustrated with clinical examples. This course is composed of videos of 5 to 15 minutes each. The PowerPoint of the course to download.

Audience: This course is intended for mental health professionals.

The expert

Dr. Debra Alvis is a licensed psychologist and internationally recognized expert in compassion fatigue prevention whose evidence-based trainings have supported thousands of healthcare professionals across medical and mental health settings worldwide. Her specialized programs have been implemented at major university health centers, helping clinicians sustain therapeutic presence while preventing burnout and secondary traumatic stress.

As founder of the Mind/Body Program at the University of Georgia, Dr. Alvis trained doctoral-level clinicians in integrative approaches that combine contemplative practices with modern neuroscience. Her research team explored applied mindfulness interventions, and she supervised psychology doctoral students while serving as university faculty. This academic foundation informs her practical, research-grounded approach to professional resilience.

For over two decades, Dr. Alvis has specialized in designing individual and group interventions that address the unique demands faced by professionals in empathy-intensive fields. Her work focuses on enhancing stress hardiness, work-life integration, and sustainable compassion through Polyvagal-informed interventions,

somatic psychotherapies, and contemplative neuroscience applications.

Dr. Alvis holds certifications as both a mindfulness meditation teacher and yoga therapist (C-IAYT), along with specialized training in mind-body medicine (MMT). She maintains an active psychotherapy practice and leads international retreats, bringing a deeply integrative perspective to clinical training. Her presentations combine rigorous scientific grounding with immediately applicable tools that clinicians can implement to protect their wellbeing while maintaining therapeutic effectiveness.

Her compassion fatigue programs emphasize measurable outcomes including improved heart rate variability, reduced emotional exhaustion, and sustained compassion satisfaction, making her trainings particularly valuable for organizations seeking evidence-based approaches to clinician wellness and retention.

Syllabus

PowerPoint
Introduction
Contemplative Practice
Disclaimers
Polyvagal Theory & How It Drives Behaviors
The Biology of Safety and Danger
Evolutionary Changes and Adaptive Functions
Defining Neuroception
Co-Regulation Through Social Engagement Behaviors
Polyvagal Informed Therapy
Establish Disorder Specific Skills to Address Mood and Attachment
Recognize & Shift Nervous System States for Depression
Savor Moments
AWE
Build Secure Attachment
Negotiate Trauma Treatment
Definition of Trauma
Polyvagal Perspective on Trauma
Repattern Social Withdrawal & Shutdown Responses
Why Work with the Body
Reading and Addressing the Somatic Narrative
Recognize Autonomic States & Strengthen Resiliency Through Contemplative Practice
Using the 5 Senses
Tone the Vagal Nerve
Interoceptive Awareness
Vagal Strengthening
The Polyvagal Therapeutic Container
The 3 Parts Breath
Therapeutic Presence, Attunement, Resonance, Trust

A Lapse of Therapeutic Presence
Evoking Safety with the Environment
Return to Practice Integrating a polyvagal Approach
Establish Relational Reciprocity & Repair Skills
Build Relationships with Self and Others
Advices and Last Thoughts
Practice- Bells of Mindfulness
Practice- Movement with Breath
Practice- The Use of Poetry and Sound
Recap
Conclusion
Additional Resources
Handouts 1
Handouts 2
Handouts 3
Handouts 4
Handouts 5

Evaluation:
To validate the achievement of the learning objectives, a final evaluation in the form of true/false questions is required. It must be completed in order to obtain the certificate of completion.
In addition, an optional self-assessment is offered at the beginning and end of the course, allowing you to measure your progress on the targeted skills.
These evaluations are not graded and are intended primarily to support your professional reflection.

Access timeline: Once registration is confirmed, you (or the learner) may start the training at any time, independently and at your own pace. You can access the training for as long as Asadis as the legal right to diffuse it (typically 10 years).

Questions? Feel free to contact us at *contact@asadis.net*