



## **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**

Dr. Debra Alvis, PhD, MMT, C-IAYT, is a licensed psychologist and wellness consultant whose compassion fatigue trainings have supported healthcare professionals worldwide, including medical staff at prominent state university health centers. She developed the Mind/Body Program at the University of Georgia, providing clinician training that integrates contemplative approaches into psychotherapy. While serving as a professor at the University of Georgia, she supervised doctoral students and co-led a research team exploring applied mindfulness practices. For over 20 years, Dr. Alvis has designed individual and group programs focused on enhancing stress hardiness, work-life balance, and resilience among professionals in empathy-intensive fields. Her extensive experience across diverse medical and mental health settings gives her a unique understanding of the demands on clinicians and the potential toll on their well-being. An international speaker and retreat leader, Dr. Alvis also maintains a private psychotherapy practice. Her trainings have helped thousands of clinicians enrich their work by blending contemplative practices, somatic psychotherapies, and Polyvagal-informed interventions. She is certified as both a mindfulness meditation teacher and a yoga therapist, reflecting her deep commitment to holistic and integrative approaches to care.

**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

Handouts 1

Establish Disorder Specific Skills to Address Mood and Attachment

Recognize & Shift Nervous System States for Depression

Savor Moments

AWE

Build Secure Attachment

Handouts 2

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

Handouts 3

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

Handouts 4

Handouts 5

Bibliography