Course: targeting the insula: a novel approach for treatment resistant clients

Address: https://asadis.net/en/course/targeting-the-insula-novel-approach-treatment-resistant-clients/

Duration: 3h30

Type of course: Continuing education

Location: Online course

Individual price: $128.00

Overview:
Emotional experience is fundamentally rooted in the body's internal states—processed through the insular cortex. It integrates sensory information from every organ system to create what we experience as feelings, urges, and self-awareness. When this integration falters, standard talk therapy is much less efficient.

This course will introduce you to the neuropsychology of the insula and its role in interoception—the perception of internal bodily states. You will learn how insular dysfunction appears across anxiety, trauma, depression, OCD, PTSD, and addiction. You will explore evidence-based techniques that engage this neural circuitry to support emotion regulation and reduce symptom persistence.

Throughout the training, you will:

• Deepen your understanding of how the insula processes cardiac, respiratory, gastrointestinal, and nociceptive signals
• Learn to recognize interoceptive dysregulation patterns in common clinical presentations
• Integrate body-based awareness techniques into your existing therapeutic approach
• Distinguish between neural networks that enable versus block therapeutic change

You will examine the anatomy and connectivity of the insular cortex across its sensorimotor, chemosensory, socio-emotional, and cognitive subdivisions. You will learn how these regions coordinate to create coherent representations of internal experience. The course will present specific interoceptive training methods targeting cardiovascular awareness, respiratory regulation, affective touch, and thermoception.

Insular activation as a mechanism of therapeutic change. A growing body of evidence supports the premise that engaging the insular cortex during psychotherapy is a key driver of clinical change. Interoceptive awareness recruits the anterior and mid-insula and sustains the cognitive control network required for neuroplasticity (Craig, 2009; Farb, Segal & Anderson, 2013; Sridharan, Levitin & Menon, 2008). Mindfulness- and body-based interventions have been shown to modulate insular structure and function and to support emotion regulation (Gibson, 2019; Guendelman, Medeiros & Rampes, 2017; Farb et al., 2015). Interoception-focused interventions have been mapped as active therapeutic targets across psychiatric disorders (Weng et al., 2021; Khalsa et al., 2018; Paulus & Stein, 2010), including trauma (Payne, Levine & Crane-Godreau, 2015), addiction (Naqvi & Bechara, 2009; Angioletti & Balconi, 2021), and depression (Harshaw, 2015; Barrett, Quigley & Hamilton, 2016). These references are highlighted in a dedicated section at the top of the bibliography.

This training will equip you with neuroscience-informed interventions that address the physiological substrate of emotional experience. You will leave with practical tools for engaging the insula in therapeutic work—particularly valuable when traditional approaches have plateaued or when working with treatment-resistant presentations.

Learning objectives:

1. Ascertain the underlying neurobiological processes and neurophysiological functions that are influenced by the insula.
2. Administer interoception techniques to address client needs.
3. Implement methods for teaching clients how to influence emotional response, integrate sensory information, and modulate decision-making, attention and memory.

Learning material:

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

Audience: This course is intended for all mental health professionals.

The expert

Dr. Janene Donarski is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist with over 20 years of specialized experience in neuropsychology, trauma treatment, and evidence-based interventions. Her clinical practice integrates neuroscience research with practical therapeutic applications, making complex brain science accessible and actionable for mental health professionals.

Dr. Donarski's expertise spans neuropsychological assessment across the lifespan, trauma and anxiety treatment, veterans and military family care, and forensic psychological evaluation. She holds advanced certifications including EMDR Level II practitioner, Clinical Anxiety Treatment Professional (CCATP), Evergreen Dementia Care Specialist, Certified Hypnotherapist, and Neuro-Linguistic Programming practitioner.

As a board member for Clinical Anxiety Treatment Professionals certification, Dr. Donarski has trained mental health professionals for over a decade, translating neuropsychological research into clinical practice. She is the author of "Anxiety & Trauma Recovery Book: Using a Neuroscience-Informed Treatment Response to Healing" and maintains an active private practice specializing in complex behavioral and neurological conditions.

Dr. Donarski's teaching approach emphasizes the neurobiological foundations of therapeutic interventions, helping clinicians understand not just what techniques to use, but why they work at the neural level. Her training programs equip practitioners with evidence-based tools for working with treatment-resistant presentations and integrating body-based awareness into traditional therapeutic frameworks.

Syllabus

PowerPoint
Introduction
The Insula - Crucial Roles
Anatomy of the Insula
The Insula's Function part 1
The Insula's Function part 2
The Insula in Mental Health
Understanding Interoception part 1
Understanding Interoception part 2
Neural Pathways and Networks
The Pain Pathway
Fear/Stress and Reward Pathways
Cognitive Control Network
Interoception and Mental Illness Overview
Depression and Interoception
Anxiety Disorders and Interoception
PTSD, Trauma and OCD
Addiction and the Insula
Interoception & Treatment Interventions
Interoception Therapies Overview
Limitations and Other Disorders
Therapeutic Foundation
Mirror Neurons and Treating Alexithymia
Yoga, Progressive Muscle Relaxation, Meditation and Visualization
Breathing Techniques
Visualization Techniques
Energizing Breaths Technique
Tapping Technique

Mirroring Technique
Dual Techniques - Bottom-Up and Top-Down
Best Practices for Visualization
Interoceptive Exposure and EPIC Model
Chronic Pain, Healthy Brain Functioning and Mindfulness
Guide Practice with Knowledge
Conclusion

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*