

## **Polyvagal Theory in Therapy: Navigating the Nervous System**

August 14–17, 2018

Deb Dana, MSW

The autonomic nervous system is the foundation of our lived experience. Polyvagal Theory has revolutionized our understanding of the neurobiology of this system and has redefined the role of the autonomic nervous system in directing human experiences of safety and the ability for social connection. Looking through this lens we see the impact of trauma and understand our clients' post-traumatic patterns of activation, hyper-vigilance, collapse, and numbing. In this experiential workshop clinicians will learn the organizing principles of Polyvagal Theory; neuroception, hierarchy, co-regulation, and then learn a three part approach to apply the theory to clinical work. Clinicians will explore multiple ways to track autonomic responses, skills to safely identify patterns of action, disconnection, and engagement, and techniques to build autonomic regulation and resilience. The workshop will provide clinicians with a process to help clients understand their neurobiology, safely listen to the trauma stories held in their autonomic nervous systems, and ways to engage the physically and psychologically regulating energies of the ventral vagal system in the process of therapeutic change.

### **Overall Purpose/Goal of Program**

With the development of Polyvagal Theory, the way we understand the human adaptive survival response has changed from a uni-directional paired antagonism model to a new bi-directional hierarchical model. This important distinction changes our understanding of human patterns of response and gives new direction for the ways therapists work with clients in shaping a successful change process. Using Polyvagal Theory, therapists have a guide to the neurophysiological processes of mobilization, collapse, and social engagement and can reliably help clients re-shape their autonomic nervous systems and change the trauma stories that are carried in the neurophysiology of autonomic pathways.

In this workshop, clinicians will be supported to add a Polyvagal lens to their therapy practice. Clinicians will be taught how to act as a co-regulating resource and to create neural exercises that bring the right degree of challenge to help shape the client's autonomic nervous system toward safety and connection. Clinicians will learn to help clients get to know their personal patterns of response and safely track changes in their autonomic states. The essential clinical questions addressed in this workshop include skills to help clients bring awareness to their adaptive survival responses, how to interrupt habitual response patterns, and ways to find safety in a state of engagement.

The target professional audience is for all levels (introductory, intermediate, and advanced psychologists and social workers)

## Program Schedule

### Tuesday, August 14

7:30–9:30 pm Introduction to Polyvagal Theory and the Science of Connection

*Learning Objectives*

- Describe the autonomic hierarchy
- Explain the process of neuroception
- Explain the autonomic need for co-regulation

### Wednesday, August 15

8:30–10:00 am Emergent Properties of Autonomic States

*Learning Objectives*

- Describe the function of the vagal brake
- Summarize common body responses, behaviors, and beliefs for each autonomic state
- Recognize how to lead clients through the basic mapping sequence

10:15–11:30 Mapping Response Patterns

*Learning Objectives*

- Identify self/client placement on the autonomic hierarchy
- Recognize how to lead clients through the basic mapping sequence

1:45–3:15 pm The Social Engagement System

*Learning Objectives*

- Identify ways to use the co-regulating pathways of the Social Engagement System in clinical sessions
- Practice co-regulating actions with clients and assess autonomic response

3:30–4:45 Tracking State Shifts over Time

*Learning Objectives*

- Identify and track self/client state shifts along the autonomic hierarchy
- Recognize and interrupt habitual response patterns

## Thursday, August 16

- 8:30–10:00 am      Resources for Regulation  
*Learning Objectives*
- Practice skills with clients using breath, movement, and touch to strengthen vagal flexibility
  - Recognize how to lead clients through neural exercises designed to relax and re-engage the vagal brake
- 10:15– 11:30      Shaping the System  
*Learning Objectives*
- Practice skills with clients using breath, movement, and touch to strengthen vagal flexibility
  - Practice co-regulating actions with clients and assess autonomic response
  - Recognize how to lead clients through neural exercises designed to relax and re-engage the vagal brake
- 1:45– 3:15 pm      Interrupting Patterns  
*Learning Objectives*
- Recognize and interrupt habitual response patterns
  - Identify ways to use the co-regulating pathways of the Social Engagement System in clinical sessions
  - Practice co-regulating actions with clients and assess autonomic response lead clients through neural exercises designed to relax and re-engage the vagal brake
- 3:30– 4:45      Practicing Polyvagal-Informed Therapy  
*Learning Objectives*
- Explain Polyvagal Theory to a client
  - Recognize how to lead clients through the basic mapping sequence

## Friday, August 17

- 8:30– 10:00 am      Clinical demonstration  
*Learning Objectives*
- Identify and track self/client state shifts along the autonomic hierarchy recognize and interrupt habitual response patterns
  - Identify ways to use the co-regulating pathways of the Social Engagement System in clinical sessions
  - Practice co-regulating actions with clients and assess autonomic response
- 10:15– 11:30      The Responsibilities of a Polyvagal-Informed Therapist  
*Learning Objective*
- Recognize and summarize the responsibilities of a clinician using Polyvagal Theory in their clinical work

## Psychology | 15.75 CE Credits

Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health maintains responsibility for this program and its content.

All programs eligible for Psychology CE credits are given full credit (excluding breaks/meals) unless otherwise noted in the schedule above.

CE credits for psychologists are only available for workshops or sessions that are at least one hour in length.

As an APA-approved sponsor of continuing education, Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health is committed to the identification and resolution of potential conflicts of interest in the planning, promotion, delivery, and evaluation of continuing education. Consistent with concepts outlined in the APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct, potential conflicts of interest occur when an individual assumes a professional role in the planning, promotion, delivery, or evaluation of continuing education where personal, professional, legal, financial, or other interests could reasonably be expected to impair his or her objectivity, competence, or effectiveness.

(Note All programs indicating the availability of psychology CE credits have been reviewed to be free of any potential conflict of interest and/or commercial support unless otherwise noted on this program's webpage.)

## Social Work | CE Credit Approval Pending

Programs have been approved for Category I Continuing Education hours for relicensure, in accordance with 258 CMR through the collaborative of NASW and the Boston College and Simmons College Schools of Social Work. Kripalu is not recognized by the state of New York to offer continuing education credits to social workers through the Collaborative of NASW-MA Chapter and the Boston College and Simmons College Schools of Social Work.

For additional CE information, please visit [kripalu.org/cecredits](http://kripalu.org/cecredits)