

# Polyvagal Theory Informed Trauma Assessment and Interventions: An Autonomic Roadmap To Safety, Connection and Healing

If our clients could have thought their way out of the impact of trauma, they would have done that a long time ago.

Trauma resolution is not about thinking. Healing depends, instead, on the work undertaken at the level of the autonomic nervous system, which shapes our clients' experiences of safety and influences their capacity for connection. Traumatic events have a far-reaching impact on this system. Autonomic pathways trigger survival responses that often lead our clients on a painful journey into a state of shutdown, collapse, and dissociation. How can we help our clients find their way back to safety, and how do we prevent it from happening in the first place?

Polyvagal Theory, developed by Stephen Porges, offers a revolutionary roadmap to lead clients out of their adaptive survival responses into the autonomically regulated state of safety that is necessary for successful trauma treatment. Dr. Porges' colleague and author of *The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy*, Deb Dana, shares this roadmap with you in this exciting 2-day workshop. You will become fluent in the language of Polyvagal Theory and confident in your ability to help clients safely tune into and reshape their nervous systems, and rewrite the trauma stories that are carried in their autonomic pathways. Come learn the organizing principles of Polyvagal Theory and work with practices designed to help clients move out of despair and isolation and return to a place of awareness, connection, and social engagement.

“

As a physician who cares for critically ill babies and their families, I found the two day Polyvagal training an invaluable addition to my tool-kit for working with families in crisis.

- Marilyn, MD

”

## Speaker

**DEB DANA, LCSW**, specializes in treating complex traumatic stress and lectures internationally on the ways Polyvagal Theory informs clinical interactions with trauma survivors. She is the coordinator of the traumatic stress research consortium in the Kinsey Institute at Indiana University and the developer of the Rhythm of Regulation clinical training series. Deb is the author of *The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy* (Norton, 2018) and co-editor with Stephen Porges, of *Clinical Applications of the Polyvagal Theory* (Norton, 2018).

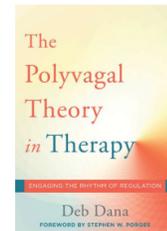
Deb received her B.A. in social welfare and her M.S.W., both from the University of Southern Maine. She is trained in Internal Family Systems, Tapas Acupressure Technique, and Sensorimotor Psychotherapy. She completed the certificate program in traumatic stress studies at the Trauma Center.

To learn more about Deb's work, visit [www.debdanalcsw.com](http://www.debdanalcsw.com) or [www.rhythmofregulation.com](http://www.rhythmofregulation.com)

Speaker Disclosures:  
Financial: Deborah Dana maintains a private practice. She is an author for W.W. Norton and receives royalties. She receives a consulting fee from Indiana University, and the Veterans Administration. Ms. Dana receives a speaking honorarium from PESI, Inc.  
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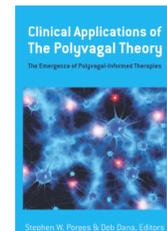
**The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy:**  
*Engaging the Rhythm of Regulation*

By **Deb Dana, LCSW [ YOUR PRESENTER ]** & **Stephen Porges, Ph.D.**

This book offers therapists an integrated approach to adding a polyvagal foundation to their work with clients. With clear explanations of the organizing principles of Polyvagal Theory, this complex theory is translated into clinician and client-friendly language. Using a unique autonomic mapping process along with worksheets designed to effectively track autonomic response patterns, this book presents practical ways to work with clients' experiences of connection. Through exercises that have been specifically created to engage the regulating capacities of the ventral vagal system, therapists are given tools to help clients reshape their autonomic nervous systems.

Adding a polyvagal perspective to clinical practice draws the autonomic nervous system directly into the work of therapy, helping clients re-pattern their nervous systems, build capacities for regulation, and create autonomic pathways of safety and connection. With chapters that build confidence in understanding Polyvagal Theory, chapters that introduce worksheets for mapping, tracking, and practices for re-patterning, as well as a series of autonomic meditations, this book offers therapists a guide to practicing polyvagal-informed therapy.

*The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy* is essential reading for therapists who work with trauma and those who seek an easy and accessible way of understanding the significance that Polyvagal Theory has to clinical work.



**Clinical Applications of the Polyvagal Theory:**  
*The Emergence of Polyvagal-Informed Therapies*

By **Stephen Porges, Ph.D. & Deborah Dana, LCSW [ YOUR PRESENTER ]**

This comprehensive edited collection brings together accomplished therapists, including those who work with children, EMDR, medical trauma, energy psychology, grief, and more. All offer clinical examples that show how the polyvagal theory provides a neurophysiological model to better understand clinical features and improve communication with clients.

More info and resources at [www.pesi.com](http://www.pesi.com)

“

Deb's training style is relaxed and comfortable. She is a kind and knowledgeable instructor of this fascinating neurobiology enhanced learning. This is a fabulous clinical journey for you and for your clients.

- Georgana, LCSW

”



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- Identify portals of intervention in the autonomic nervous system
- Become an important co-regulating resource for clients in their search for experiences of safety
- Help clients rewrite the trauma narratives carried in their autonomic pathways
- Strengthen your clinical practice with Polyvagal-informed assessment and interventions

“ With seamless fluidity Deb Dana bridges the intuitions of a master clinician with the insights of the Polyvagal Theory to formulate a powerful treatment model to guide the client on a journey from the abyss of helplessness to the empowerment of connectedness.

- Stephen W. Porges, PhD  
Originator of Polyvagal Theory

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# Outline

## ESSENTIALS OF POLYVAGAL THEORY

- Evolution of the autonomic nervous system
- How trauma influences autonomic profiles
- Three organizing principles
  - Neuroception: Detection without perception
  - Hierarchy: 3 predictable pathways of response
  - Coregulation: The biological imperative

## NAVIGATE THE AUTONOMIC HIERARCHY

- Exploring three autonomic circuits
  - Sympathetic branch
  - Ventral vagal pathway
  - Dorsal vagal pathway
- How trauma shapes cycles of autonomic response
- Engage the regulating capacities of the autonomic nervous system
- Introduction to autonomic mapping

## NEUROCEPTION AND THE SHAPING OF AUTONOMIC PATHWAYS

- Understand the internal surveillance system
- Track cues of safety and danger
- Everyday “biological rudeness”
- Trauma, autonomic wisdom, and cognitive override

## THE SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT SYSTEM

- The five elements of the Social Engagement System
- What happens when parts of the system are unavailable?
- Using the Social Engagement System to regulate states
- Exercising the Social Engagement System

## TRACKING AUTONOMIC STATES

- Seeing patterns over time
- Use micro-moments to resource change
- Explore the blended states of play and stillness
- Create autonomic anchors

## MEETING THE BIOLOGICAL NEED FOR CONNECTION

- Mapping the continuum of solitude to sociality
- Create safety in co-regulation
- Working with the cycle of reciprocity - rupture - repair

## SHAPING THE AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM TOWARD SAFETY

- Identify portals of intervention
- Create neural exercises
- Use breath as a regulator
- Resourcing new patterns through movement
- Explore the autonomic response to touch
- Use autonomic imagery

## INCORPORATING POLYVAGAL THEORY IN CLINICAL PRACTICE

- Getting comfortable teaching Polyvagal Theory to clients
- Tracking the 8 steps of a Polyvagal-Informed clinical session
- Polyvagal-Informed assessment and treatment planning
- Polyvagal Theory and Phase I trauma treatment

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF A POLYVAGAL-INFORMED THERAPIST

- The guiding questions
- Ethical considerations
- Research limitations and potential risks

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# Objectives

- Describe the principles of Polyvagal Theory and how to communicate them in client friendly language.
- Explore three circuits of the autonomic nervous system for the purpose of client psychoeducation.
- Analyze how the autonomic nervous system operates as an internal surveillance system and its impact on clients’ habitual responses to trauma.
- Determine how to help clients engage the regulating capacities of the autonomic nervous system in order to create an environment of safety.
- Explain how to exercise the Social Engagement System to assist clients in becoming more adept in skills of co-regulation and creating reciprocal relationships.
- Assess for patterns in clients’ autonomic states to better inform treatment planning.
- Summarize the trauma-informed therapist’s role as co-regulator and its impact on clinical outcomes.
- Identify portals of intervention in the autonomic nervous system to more effectively establish safety and treat trauma.
- Discover the right degree of neural challenge and exercises to employ with clients to help shape the autonomic nervous system toward safety and connection.
- Examine how to work with the cycle or reciprocity-rupture-repair in helping clients achieve the biological need for connection.
- Design a Polyvagal-informed clinical practice based on appropriate assessment and treatment planning.
- Examine ethical issues, research limitations, and potential risks to be considered by a Polyvagal-informed therapist.

# Live Seminar and Webcast Schedule for both days

(Times in Eastern)

**7:30** Registration/Morning Coffee & Tea

**8:00** Program begins

**11:50-1:00** Lunch (on your own)

**4:00** Program ends

There will be two 15-min breaks (mid-morning & mid-afternoon). Actual lunch and break start times are at the discretion of the speaker. A more detailed schedule is available upon request.

“ Deb Dana’s Polyvagal training has transformed my psychotherapy practice. Deb’s teaching is clear, informative and inspiring. The workshop incorporates the vision and the practical applications of Polyvagal Theory into a user-friendly model that is relevant to any clinical setting. ”

— Gary, PhD, LMFT