

Nurturing the Heart with the Brain in Mind: Advanced Training in Interpersonal Neurobiology

72-hour Advanced Training in the Application of Interpersonal Neurobiology to Psychotherapy

Facilitated by Karen Welch, LMFT and Heidi Struble, MFA

The training is comprised of 4 3-day 18-hour training sessions.

First Gathering

Day 1: We will begin each session with a mindfulness practice to foster embodiment and nonjudgmental awareness as a foundation for cultivating greater presence with our clients. We will form Listening Partnerships for the year and then begin to describe our embodied brains, with emphasis on the belly brain, heart brain, and autonomic nervous system. We will also discuss the work of Iain McGilchrist regarding the two hemispheres of the brain and their relationship to being present. Group discussion will support deeper learning.

Learning objectives:

- . Describe the importance of cultivating nonjudgmental presence as a foundation of safety.
- . Describe the three branches of the autonomic nervous system, according to Stephen Porges.
- . List three or more aspects of the embodied brain.
- . Explain the meaning of neuroception and how it differs from perception.
- . List four features each of the right and left hemispheres of the brain, according to Iain McGilchrist.

Day 2: After opening with the mindfulness practice, we will continue to discuss our embodied brains with focus on the brainstem and midbrain circuitry. We will introduce the neurobiology of sand tray work and non-dominant hand drawing and have our first sand tray experience. Group discussion will be interspersed. To demonstrate the work with clients, we will have two client consultations with volunteers from the group.

Learning objectives:

- . Describe the brainstem's role in regulating the rhythms of the embodied brain.
- . List the seven social-emotional circuits of the midbrain identified by Jaak Panksepp.
- . List key differences in the "top down" and "bottom up" theories of emotion models.
- . Discuss the midbrain circuits that come online when we experience disconnection from others.
- . List three ways that experiential methods such as sand tray and non-dominant hand drawing can help our clients heal implicit memory and early traumatic experiences.

Day 3: After beginning the day with the mindfulness practice, we will discuss the formation of implicit memory, how it is related to explicit memory, and discuss the neurobiology of disconfirming/reparative experiences for changing the felt sense of implicit memories. We will return to the sand tray to further concretize this learning and conclude the day with review of the principles we have discussed during our first weekend together.

Learning objectives:

- . Describe developmental milestones in the first two years of life
- . Describe how implicit memories are formed.
- . Discuss the components of implicit memory and how we can identify them in our clients.
- . Discuss the components of explicit memory and how we can discuss them with our clients.
- . List the two essential components of disconfirming experiences.
- . Describe the impact of traumatic experiences on the development of the various aspects of memory.

Second Gathering

Day 1: We will begin with our practice for embodiment and nonjudgmental presence to better support our clients. We will discuss how the information and experiences from the first gathering are being applied with clients. We will discuss the neurobiology of attachment, including the basic patterns of security, ambivalence, avoidance, and disorganization. To demonstrate the power of sand tray and non-dominant hand drawing in uncovering and healing insecure attachments, we will return to these practices.

Learning objectives:

- . Describe the neurobiological correlates of secure attachment.
- . Describe the neurobiological correlates of avoidant attachment.
- . Describe the neurobiological correlates of ambivalent attachment.
- . Discuss the neurobiological correlates of disorganized attachment.
- . Discuss the role of rupture and repair in the establishment of secure attachment.

Day 2: After doing our morning practice and discussing any questions from the previous day, discuss in depth the neurobiology and interpersonal aspects of disorganized attachment, including in utero experiences of mother's terror. Discuss the kinds of interpersonal experiences that can provide the foundation for organization. Discuss how the joined window of tolerance between client and therapist can be assessed. Return to the sand tray to continue to explore the dynamics of disorganized attachment. We will also have two client consultations in the afternoon.

Learning objectives:

- . Describe the kind of in utero experiences that can generate the foundation for pockets of disorganization.
- . Discuss the kinds of autonomic nervous system activation we might experience when our clients drop into pockets of disorganization.
- . Identify behavioral indicators of disorganized attachment in infants and toddlers.
- . Describe the neurobiology of our presence in ventral vagal parasympathetic providing the foundation for organizing disorganized attachment.
- . Discuss how we can determine if we are within the joined window of tolerance when experiences of disorganization arise in our clients.

Day 3: Beginning with our morning practice, we will then review the neurobiological foundations of avoidant and ambivalent attachment, continuing on to discuss the interpersonal characteristics of both. To demonstrate the trajectory of sand tray work and non-dominant hand drawing with clients experiencing the effects of these kinds of attachment, we will continue our work. We will discuss how these principles of attachment can be applied with our clients.

Learning objectives:

- . Describe the kinds of disconfirming experiences that will help our clients with ambivalent attachment move toward earned secure attachment.
- . Describe the kinds of disconfirming experiences that will help our clients with avoidant attachment move toward earned secure attachment.
- . Describe three characteristics of earned secure attachment.
- . Discuss the ways that our own attachment status may impact our work with our clients.

Third Gathering

Day 1: We will begin with our morning practice, continuing to build neural strength for the foundation of nonjudgmental presence to support safety with our clients. We will discuss how the information and experience of attachment is being applied in the therapy room. We will then discuss in detail the neurobiology of inner community development (including nurturing pairs, protectors, and unresolved pairs).

Learning objectives:

- . Discuss how understanding of mirror neurons and resonance circuitry has changed over the years including ongoing disagreements within the scientific community
- . Describe the role of mirror neurons and resonance circuitry in the development of the inner community.
- . Discuss how the presence of those who have hurt us in the inner community provides opportunities for depth healing of traumatic experiences.
- . Describe the neurobiology of the layering in the inner community.
- . Describe the adaptive nature of protectors both at the time of their development and now.

Day 2: After our morning practice, we will concretize the experience of inner community by embodying its development and healing. We will then return to the sand tray to further embody the layers of inner community, from the most conscious (nurturing pairs) to least conscious (unresolved pairs), with a particular emphasis on the development of protectors. In the afternoon, we will have two client consultations focusing on the client's attachment and how working with this client activates our own attachment patterns.

Learning objectives:

- . Demonstrate how to approach and befriend protectors.

- . Discuss the development of particular protectors in response to embedded traumatic experiences, including both interpersonal and genetic factors.
- . List three kinds of protectors that may develop for each of the three insecure attachment patterns.
- . Demonstrate how to talk with clients about inner community.
- . Demonstrate how to use experiential activities with clients in order to help them better understand aspects of the inner community.

Day 3: After our morning practice, we will review the principles of inner community wounding and healing that we have been studying this weekend. We will describe the practice of radical inclusiveness of all parts, and how this practice creates safety for our clients. We will then discuss into the relationship between protectors and unresolved pairs in our inner world. In a final sand tray and non-dominant hand drawing, we will increase our skill in supporting inner community work with our clients. We will review what we have gained through didactic learning and experience, and conclude with a review of the year-long experience so far.

Learning objectives:

- . Describe a neurobiologically accurate way of understanding how inner community forms.
- . Demonstrate skill in speaking with clients about internalized others.
- . Describe the processes through which inner community members can experience implicit healing.
- . Discuss the value of practicing the gradual development of radical inclusion of all parts and how this fosters safety in our clients.
- . Demonstrate skill in supporting clients in the practices of sand tray and non-dominant hand drawing with regard to inner community members.

Fourth Gathering

Day 1: Beginning with our morning practice, we will reconnect to the group support through sharing, beginning to process our feelings about this being our final group. Then we will discuss how the teachings about inner community are being applied with our clients. Then we will further discuss healing unresolved pairs, particularly attending to how our inner communities are touched with particular clients. The primary emphasis this weekend will be on application in the counseling room of all we have learned this year.

Learning objectives:

- . Describe the relationship of attachment experiences to the development of inner community.
- . Demonstrate the ability to articulate for clients the way that both members of unresolved inner pairs can heal.
- . Discuss, with reference to a particular client, how your inner community members can be activated.
- . Describe one experience of offering disconfirming experiences to both members of an inner dyad.
- . Discuss how the inner community perspective builds capacity for broad compassion internally through empathic identification with imported ones.

Day 2: After our morning practice, we will discuss how healing brings narrative change. We will describe that while worded narratives may be one final outcome of the healing process, narrative begins to change at the level of felt sense experience and behavior before moving to the left hemisphere and becoming story. We will discuss how the metaphors that arise naturally for us indicate which hemisphere of the brain is dominant and how this influences the brain dominance of our clients.

Learning objectives:

- . Describe the relationship between changes in implicit memory and explicit story.
- . Discuss factors that make it challenging for traumatic implicit memories to be reconsolidated.
- . Describe how metaphors reveal which hemisphere of our brain is dominant.
- . Describe possible changes in the belly brain, heart brain, autonomic nervous system, brainstem, and midbrain as a result of gradually emerging narrative change.
- . Describe the changes you are seeing over time in this regard with one client.

Day 3: After our morning practice, we will continue processing our feelings about this being the final meeting of the group. We will then systematically review our pathway through interpersonal neurobiology this year from study of the embodied brain to implicit memory to attachment to inner community. We will do a final sand tray to celebrate the listening partnerships. We will discuss ways to continue deepening in the practical application of interpersonal neurobiology.

Learning objectives:

- . List the aspects of the embodied brain that we have studied.
- . Describe the neurobiological and interpersonal characteristics of the four attachment patterns.
- . Discuss the neurobiology of the formation of embedded traumas, and the process of changing implicit memory through disconfirming experiences.
- . Describe the neurobiology of the development of the inner community, and process for healing both members of a dyad.
- . Discuss how this year's learning is becoming a narrative that supports nonjudgmental awareness and increased compassion for our clients.