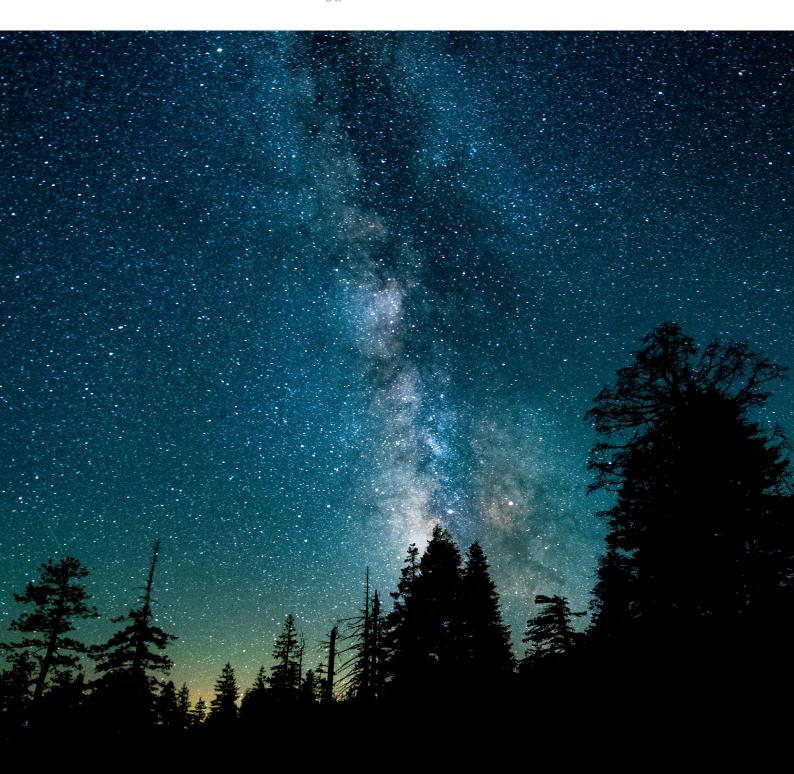
Dissociation and DID: The Fundamentals

online training





Session Summaries | Reflection Questions | References | Notes

Session 1 - Introduction

Session summary – what will you learn?

- → Exploring the phenomenological experience of living with dissociation and dissociative identity disorder
- → Exploring different ways of framing dissociative experiences, e.g. as mental collapse or mental survival
- → Exploring concepts from interpersonal neurobiology and our need for social support in processing traumatic experiences
- → Exploring the experience and challenges of recovery from dissociative processing
- → Understanding dissociation as a response to trauma, and dissociative disorders as an adaptation to chronic, persistent threat
- → Exploring the concept of pathological dissociation as a chronic threat-based self-reinforcing feedback loop

Reflection Questions

1. What does the word 'dissociation' mean to you? Does it have a variety of mear
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2. What is the purpose and function of dissociation? What would someone do if dissociation didn't exist?

3. What is 'trauma'? Is it a 'bad' or 'distressing' event? Or what is it?

Session 2 – Defining dissociation and trauma (1)

Session summary – what will you learn?

- → Exploring the multiple meanings of dissociation and the linguistic origins and distinctions between 'dissociation' and 'disassociation'
- → Exploring different ways of viewing dissociation: neurobiologically, diagnostically and phenomenologically
- → Understanding trauma as eliciting a specific neurobiological response involving powerlessness ('freeze') rather than simply 'extreme distress'
- ightarrow Exploring the long-term neurobiological shifts caused by trauma

Reflection Questions

1.	What might	'hypervigilance for t	threat' look like in practice?
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2. If dissociation is normal and natural as a response to trauma, why do you think it's medically seen as a disorder?

3. What are the pros and cons of avoiding reminders of trauma?

Session 3 – Defining dissociation and trauma (2)

Session summary – what will you learn?

→ Exploring the role of active defences in mitigating long-term traumatisation	\rightarrow	Exploring	the role of	active defend	ces in mitigati	na lona-term	traumatisation
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- → Exploring what happens in the brain at the moment of trauma
- → Exploring the trauma traffic light (polyvagal theory)
- → Exploring the peri-traumatic of fight-flight-freeze
- → Exploring the freeze response as correlative to dissociation
- \rightarrow Exploring the nature and survival role of dissociation

Reflection Questions

1.	When you have experienced a sudden threat or shock, what has the amber 'fight or flight' response in you
	body felt like?

2. Have you ever experienced the red zone of freeze or dissociation? What was it like?

3. In what ways do you or your client try to avoid the trauma ever happening again, by avoiding reminders or triggers of the event?

Session 4 – What is it like to be dissociative?

Session summary – what will you learn?

\rightarrow	o Exploring via narrative the experience of dissociation and dissociated identities as they may pr	esent in the
	therapy room, including:	

- → trauma reenactments
- \rightarrow challenges for the professional/supporter
- \rightarrow attempted repression of parts
- \rightarrow the role of self-abuse in perpetuating dissociation
- \rightarrow and the role of co-consciousness
- → Introducing the theory of structural dissociation by exploring the distinction between 'apparently normal personalities' and 'emotional personalities'

Reflection Questions

1. What is your experience of people who dissociate, or have DID?

2. How would you go about building trust with a dissociative survivor?

3. Do you think alienation was unique to me, or a common experience?

Session 5 – When dissociation persists: dissociative disorders

Session summary – what will you learn?

- → Exploring how peri-traumatic dissociation persists and develops into a dissociative disorder
- ightarrow Exploring the distinction between PTSD and DID in terms of secondary and tertiary structural dissociation
- \rightarrow Exploring the distinction between simple and complex PTSD
- \rightarrow Exploring the link between DID and disorganised attachment
- → Exploring a spectrum of trauma responses as they map to psychiatric disorders
- ightarrow Exploring the diagnosis of dissociative disorders via DSM-5 and ICD-11 criteria
- → Introducing the partial DID diagnosis of OSDD (DDNOS), Dissociative Amnesia and Depersonalisation/ Derealisation Disorder

Reflection Questions

1.	Have you ever	experienced	feelings c	of unreality?	What was it lik	ce? What triggered it?
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2. How do people who don't habitually dissociate manage their feelings?

3. How does dissociation help people to regulate their emotions?

Session 6 – Dissociation as a disorder of realisation

Session summary – what will you learn?

- → Exploring the concept of multiplicity and the dangers of sensationalism
- → Exploring the link between multiplicity and avoidance of knowledge of the trauma
- → Understanding the development of dissociative parts of the personality in terms of survival advantage
- → Understanding DID as solving a paradox between knowing and not knowing about the trauma, and the conflict between the demands of danger and daily life
- \rightarrow Exploring Jennifer Freyd's betrayal theory and the work of the False Memory Syndrome Foundation.
- → Understanding dissociation as a 'disorder of realisation'
- \rightarrow Exploring inconsistency and paradox as a fundamental expression of the dissociative mind.
- ightarrow Understanding dissociation as an affect-regulation mechanism

	Refl	ection	Quest	tions
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1.	What do you think to the idea of	of 'betrayal trauma'	and 'betrayal blindness'?
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2. Can you see how parts might operate either in terms of getting on with daily life or being stuck in the trauma response of danger?

3. What kind of feelings might trauma abuse evoke? How might they manifest without dissociating?

Session 7 – Where do you get help? (1)

Session summary – what will you learn?

- → Exploring the pathways and avenues to getting help for dissociative experiences
- → Understanding the necessity of safety in the genesis of healing
- → Exploring the importance of mindset and identity in the pursuit of healing
- \rightarrow Exploring the role of powerlessness as a trauma symptom and its impact on recovery
- → Exploring roadblocks to recovery
- \rightarrow Introducing the concept of a phase-based approach to trauma treatment
- → Exploring the idea of the need to develop alternative strategies for affect regulation other than dissociation

Reflection Questions

1.	How can you help a dissociative survivor to gain both physical and emotional safety in their lives, to prepare
	them for healing?

2. What do you think to the idea that many of our behaviours are simply our best way of trying to regulate out-of-control emotions?

3. Do you ever find yourself feeling critical or judgemental of anyone who appears to resist being helped? Why might they be resisting you?

Session 8 – Where do you get help? (2)

Session summary – what will you learn?

- → Exploring myths of 'trauma treatment'
- → Exploring reasons for the abandonment of recovery/help-seeking
- → Understanding the importance of the equal need for challenge and validation
- \rightarrow Introducing the ISSTD Treatment Guidelines for DID
- \rightarrow Exploring the relative dearth of treatment options via NHS and statutory services
- → Exploring non-statutory alternatives to treatment
- → Exploring the validity and value of a diagnosis
- \rightarrow Exploring routes to a diagnosis and the role of screening

Reflection Questions

1	١.	What do you think the greatest (challenges are	for people try	ing to get help fo	or a dissociative	disorder?

2. How important do you think a diagnosis is and what are the pros and cons as you see them?

3. What support can you provide someone who isn't yet ready for therapy?

Session 9 – How do you help a dissociative survivor?

Session summary – what will you learn?

- → Exploring how to support a person with a dissociative disorder
- \rightarrow Exploring the importance of breaking stigma and shame through acceptance
- → Exploring the importance of the supporting person being able to stay emotionally regulated
- → Introducing the concept of the window of tolerance and the trauma traffic light
- → Exploring how to decrease or increase physiological arousal levels
- → Explaining the fundamental distinction between the 'front brain' and 'back brain'
- → Understanding how to work within a window of tolerance and assess the trauma traffic light state of the dissociative survivor and respond accordingly
- → Understanding the importance of remaining in the green zone
- → Understanding the genesis and impact of secondary traumatisation and how to mitigate it
- \rightarrow Exploring the role of supervision for helpers
- → Exploring the importance of balanced exposure

Reflection Questions

1.	What provision do you have in your life for some form of 'supervision' – of someone else helping you stand
	back and use your front brain to really think about what's going on?

2. How would you know if someone else's trauma is triggering you?

3. How do you know if you're heading into the amber or red zone? What are the signs?

Session 10 – Dealing with parts

Session summary – what will you learn?

- → Further exploring how to help a dissociative survivor
- \rightarrow Exploring whether switching to other parts of the personality is a problem, and if so for whom
- → Exploring different approaches to the presentation of traumatised parts of the personality, ranging from the sociocognitive model to the extremes of reification
- → How to manage triggered states
- \rightarrow How to use the trauma traffic light model to re-regulate
- → How to manage traumatic disclosures

Overall Learning Reflection from this session and the course as a whole

References / Additional Resources

SESSION 6

- Betrayal Trauma by Jennifer Freyd: https://amzn.to/3tte72s
- Coping with Trauma-Related Dissociation by Suzette Boon, Kathy Steele and Onno van der Hart: https://amzn.to/3xU5HVy
- Treating Trauma-Related Dissociation by Kathy Steele, Suzette Boon and Onno van der Hart: https://amzn.to/3MDobT8

SESSION 8

- Clinic for Dissociative Studies: www.clinicds.org.uk
- The Pottergate Centre (Norwich): www.dissociation.co.uk

Notes

Notes

Info and links

'Dissociation and DID: The Fundamentals' online training by Carolyn Spring

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