

# Trauma and the Body: Dissociation and Somatisation online training



by Carolyn Spring



Session Summaries | Reflection Questions | References | Notes





## Session summary – what will you learn?

- Exploring the physiology and phenomenology of freeze (dorsal vagal) as a survival response
- Understanding the manifestation of the freeze responses as dissociative phenomena
- Introducing Peter Levine's theories of freeze and shaking as stages in immobilisation and re-mobilisation
- Exploring the role of medication in dampening the remobilisation process
- Exploring the breath as an interface between the autonomic and voluntary nervous systems and its role in reactivating the ventral vagus
- Introducing concepts from Sensorimotor Psychotherapy of 'completing the action' to move out of freeze
- Exploring the role of body posture and voluntary action in retraining the 'back brain' into a mobilised responses to stress
- Introducing concepts from Pierre Janet of 'acts of triumph' and using 'alternative endings' to process and repair the trauma narrative

## Reflection Questions

1. At a time when you have felt helpless in the past, what is it that your body would have done if it could have done?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What 'acts of triumph' are there in your life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. In what ways have you 'forgotten' how to engage active responses in your life?

## Overall Learning Reflection from this session

## Session summary – what will you learn?

- Exploring the red zone as a habituated psychological state of learned helplessness via the research of Martin Seligman
- Exploring the concept of habituated freeze as the basis for a dissociative disorder
- Exploring the belief of 'I can't' as a trauma response not just a belief or a choice
- Exploring how to overcome mental barriers which resist overcoming learned helplessness
- Exploring the concept of 'bottom-up' versus 'top-down' processing via the McGurk Effect
- Exploring the efficacy of mindfulness in disrupting 'bottom-up' processing and how it acts as a counter to dissociation

## Reflection Questions

1. What did you think of the 'Faa Baa' clip? Could you override what your eyes were telling you?
2. What barriers does your brain still 'see' that might not be there?
3. What role does learned helplessness play in your life?

## Overall Learning Reflection from this session

## Session summary – what will you learn?

- Exploring cortisol-deficient physical states including depression, overtraining and CFS/ME
- Exploring the theory of chronic fatigue syndrome as a red zone response to excessive amber state activation
- Exploring CFS in terms of mitochondrial malfunction and the syndrome's overlap with coronary failure
- Exploring the role of persistent amygdala activation in autonomic dysregulation

## Reflection Questions

1. To what extent do you believe that recovery from trauma is physical as well as psychological?
2. How might you need to adapt the services you provide to clients with chronic health conditions to access trauma therapy?
3. How can you help the survivor's back brain begin to recognise that the trauma is over so that the alarm stops sounding?

## Overall Learning Reflection from this session

## Session summary – what will you learn?

- Exploring a phenomenological narrative of chronic pain
- Exploring the psychosocial intersections of pain
- Exploring the contrast between intuitive understandings of pain and the role of cognition, belief, expectation and meaning in pain experience, especially in relation to trauma
- Introducing ‘Gate Control Theory’
- Introducing concepts around phantom pain and ‘the rubber hand experiment’ and how they demonstrate the psychological component of pain and the potential for ‘body memories’

## Reflection Questions

1. What opens the pain gate (increases pain)?

2. What closes the gate (decreases pain)?

3. Any other thoughts?

## Overall Learning Reflection from this session

## Session summary – what will you learn?

- Further exploring the concept of pain as a construct of the mind not just a signalling of physical injury
- Exploring the link between somatisation and alexithymia and trauma
- Exploring the role of the right orbitofrontal cortex in pain experience, social connectedness, verbal expression and immunity

## Reflection Questions

1. In what ways does your body communicate your emotions?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. If a part of your body (that is unwell or in pain) could speak, what might it say to you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. In what ways do you listen to your body?

## Overall Learning Reflection from this session



## Session summary – what will you learn?

- Exploring the concept of trauma and memory and in particular traumatic amnesia
- Understanding the phenomenological experience of flashbacks
- Differentiating between hippocampus-driven explicit memory, and amygdala-driven implicit memory, and how this contributes to traumatic memory as being qualitatively different to ‘normal’ memory
- Understanding the loss/lack of explicit memory through clinical examples of hippocampal loss
- Exploring the phenomenological experience of reduced explicit memory alongside heightened implicit memory
- Exploring the clinical implications of ‘making the implicit explicit’
- Exploring the role of the hippocampus as a ‘context stamp’ for memory and the importance of keeping it online in revisiting traumatic memory

## Reflection Questions

1. Do you think you need to be able to remember the trauma (‘explicit memory’) in order to be able to recover from it? Why or why not?
2. Do you view triggers as negatives to be avoided, or as guides to what needs to be integrated?
3. How can you help a client stay within their ‘window of tolerance’ when working through traumatic memories?

## Overall Learning Reflection from this session



## SESSION 2

- *When The Body Says No* by Gabor Maté: <https://amzn.to/3eXMjhD>
- *The Cortisol Connection* by Shawn Talbott: <https://amzn.to/3eqtHlb>
- *How To Make Stress Your Friend* by Kelly McGonigal:  
[www.ted.com/talks/kelly\\_mcgonigal\\_how\\_to\\_make\\_stress\\_your\\_friend](http://www.ted.com/talks/kelly_mcgonigal_how_to_make_stress_your_friend)

## SESSION 3

- *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma* by Peter Levine: <https://amzn.to/3eYYN8z>

## SESSION 4

- *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation* by Daniel Siegel:  
<https://amzn.to/3tlyUol>
- Headspace App: [www.headspace.com](http://www.headspace.com)

## SESSION 5

- *Diagnosis and Treatment of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome* by Dr Sarah Myhill: <https://amzn.to/33mBKID>
- Dr Sarah Myhill's website for info on CFS: [www.drmyhill.co.uk](http://www.drmyhill.co.uk)

## SESSION 6

- *The Rubber Hand Illusion*: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qsmkgj7FgEo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qsmkgj7FgEo)

## SESSION 8

- *Eight Keys to Safe Trauma Recovery* by Babette Rothschild: <https://amzn.to/3nWmUcn>
- Clive Wearing info: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clive\\_Wearing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clive_Wearing)

## SESSION 9

- *23½ Hours Visual Presentation* by Dr Mike Evans: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUalnS6HIGo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUalnS6HIGo)



## Info and links

### **‘Trauma and the Body: Dissociation and Somatisation’ online training by Carolyn Spring**

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#### **Quick course links**

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To find your purchased courses at any time go to [www.carolynspring.com/online-training/my-courses](http://www.carolynspring.com/online-training/my-courses).

For troubleshooting go to [www.carolynspring.com/faq/#platform](http://www.carolynspring.com/faq/#platform). As a first step, always make sure you're logged in first.

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