

MENTAL HEALTH THERAPY WITH THE AUTISTIC CLIENT

VIRTUAL TRAINING FOR CLINICIANS

This clinical training focuses on identifying DSM-5 mental health diagnoses in autistic clients and how to adapt mental health therapy to effectively support autistic clients. An introductory course begins with foundational concepts of autistic neurology (thinking style and way of handling information) as well as trauma and life stressors autistic individuals often experience. The next section covers the history of the autism diagnosis with implications for today, establishing successful client sessions, setting up the environment, and determining appropriate therapeutic goals. The remaining parts of the course cover topics such as differential diagnosis of autistic attributes from comorbid DSM disorders, adapting therapeutic modalities for autistic neurology, and implementing therapy against the backdrop of concepts learned in previous sections. The trainers will explore techniques considered to be evidenced-based practices through a neuro-affirming lens and how they can be used in mental health therapy with autistic clients. Many case examples will be highlighted along with practical information on helpful assessment tools.

Participating clinicians will receive training and access to 3 assessment tools for clinical use.

- Assessment of Clinical Spaces for Autistic Clients (currently in development by presenters)
- Executive Functioning Assessment (Endow, 2021)
- Core Area System of Support (currently in development by presenters)

For a total of about 30 content hours total, each of the 5 parts includes approximately 6 hours of recorded, virtual instruction, divided into two-hour segments. There is a one-hour live Q&A session with the presenters following each part.

Registration Fee: \$395



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AUTISMGREATERWI.ORG

MENTAL HEALTH THERAPY WITH THE AUTISTIC CLIENT

TRAINING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION: AUTISTIC MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Mental health and wellness are important for all people. To support mental health and wellness for autistic people it is important to understand their particular style of thinking and the way their brain handles information along with the impact of both environmental and other types of trauma. Additionally, when it comes to mental health and well-being, there are specific stressors unique to autistic individuals. This three-part series will examine these topics, giving you a foundation of shared knowledge. During this section, clinicians will be invited to examine their own biases when it comes to neurodivergence and ableism.

Course Objectives:

- Clinicians will be able to identify three characteristics present in the autistic style of cognitive processing.
 - Clinicians will have a better understanding of specific stressors that may impact their autistic clients.
 - Clinicians will examine their own ableism and consider its implications on working with autistic clients.
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PART ONE: BEGINNING CONSIDERATIONS

In the field of therapy, Autism is relatively a newer-on-the-scene diagnosis. It has a short history in the DSM, first appearing as a diagnostic entity in 1980. Before that it was called Childhood Schizophrenia. Since then, Autism as a diagnosis has undergone multiple changes. In this section, Judy will track those changes along with their significance and implications for therapists today. Additionally, the limitations of the DSM will be juxtaposed with neuro-affirmation of autistic neurology. With this understanding in mind, the trainers will go through an example of a framework to use in establishing therapy sessions with an autistic client and will provide an example of a first session with a client. Then, Lisa and Sharon will delve deeper into the beginning considerations when working with autistic clients. They will address topics such as setting up the environment for success and determining appropriate therapeutic goals with clients.

Course Objectives:

- Clinicians will obtain the background knowledge of the DSM diagnosis of Autism and the clinical implications that history has on autism and mental health disorders.
 - Clinicians will feel confident setting up initial sessions with their autistic clients.
 - Clinicians will have the tools and knowledge to evaluate their current clinical settings and identify specific changes to make the setting safer and more welcoming for autistic clients.
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PART TWO: DIAGNOSING OTHER MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS IN AUTISTIC CLIENTS

Therapists who see autistic individuals in their mental health practice need to differentiate whether the presenting symptoms are a comorbid DSM diagnosis or are better explained by autistic style of thinking, way of handling information (taking in, processing, storing and retrieving information), sensory differences, trauma impacts, or other autistic attributes. This session will include discussion of common assessment tools along with adaptations needed for clinicians to successfully use the tools with autistic clients.

The session will also include a discussion about common DSM diagnostic checklists, specifically applying concepts from the introductory series to the DSM diagnostic entities. Using a combination of slide presentation, interactive discussion with all three presenters, and specific case examples, this session will illustrate the many aspects of differential diagnosing of autistic attributes from comorbid DSM diagnoses with autistic clients.

Course Objectives:

- Clinicians will develop an understanding of the autistic traits that might overlap with other DSM diagnoses.
 - Clinicians will be able to adapt commonly used assessment tools to make them more accessible to their autistic clients.
 - Clinicians will feel more confident determining when an autistic client also has a co-morbid mental health disorder.
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PART THREE: ADAPTING THERAPEUTIC MODALITIES

Part three will include a discussion of strategies for adapting a variety of common therapeutic modalities for the autistic neurology. Some of the modalities explored will include: CBT, DBT, Mindfulness, Expressive Therapy Modalities, ACT, and Solution Focused Therapy. The trainers will examine the use of techniques considered to be evidenced-based practices through a neuro-affirming lens and how utilizing these practices can help make mental health treatment more accessible for autistic clients. This section will be delivered using a combination of slide presentation and interactive discussion with all three presenters.

Course Objectives:

- Clinicians will be able to identify strengths and weaknesses of common mental health treatment modalities as they relate to autistic clients and ways to assess the appropriateness of fit.
 - Clinicians will feel confident adapting current treatment modalities used in their clinical practice to align with autistic neurology.
 - Clinicians will be able to identify evidenced-based practices from the teaching field and be able to apply them to mental health treatment.
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PART FOUR: IMPLEMENTING THERAPY

In this final section, the presenters will use case examples to integrate information learned in previous sections on how to set up the therapeutic environment and establish therapeutic goals, how to differentiate presenting symptoms, and how to adapt therapy modalities with autistic clients so that participants walk away with practical, ready-to-use tools and strategies to start implementing in the clinical setting. This section will be delivered using a combination of slide presentation and interactive discussion with all three presenters.

Course Objectives:

- Clinicians will be able to identify how treatment modalities were adapted and individualized for autistic clients in case examples provided.
- Clinicians will feel confident integrating the information from previous sections into their clinical practice.
- Clinicians will be able to identify other resources they can access to continue learning about the intersection of autism and mental health disorders.

MEET THE PRESENTERS



Judy Endow, LCSW, author and international speaker on a variety of autism-related topics has been providing trainings for clinicians and school staff for more than 20 years. She has written numerous articles and books, including award winners: *Learning the Hidden Curriculum: The Odyssey of One Autistic Adult*, and *Paper Words: Discovering and Living with My Autism*. Her latest book is *Autistically Thriving: Reading Comprehension, Conversational Engagement, and Living a Self-Determined Life Based on Autistic Neurology*. As a person who lived some of her early years in an institution, Endow has emerged as a leader in the autism community.

At Common Threads Family Resource Center in McFarland, WI, she provided consulting and training for both school and clinical staff along with clinical services for autistic clients and families. Additionally, she has provided autism consultation and training for school districts, adult services and other organizations in WI and in other states and countries.

Endow received the Autism Society of America's Cathy Pratt Professional of the Year Award – the first autistic person to receive this prestigious national award. Endow has served on the boards of both the Autism Society of America, Wisconsin Chapter and the Autism National Committee, was featured in the New York Times' Patient Voices, and was honored by The Art of Autism as one of the most influential bloggers on the web. Endow has made over 400 presentations all over the world.

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MEET THE PRESENTERS



Sharon Hammer, MS, LPC, is a Licensed Professional Counselor and an Education and Behavioral Consultant. She is a partner at Imagine a Child's Capacity, where she provides psychotherapy to clients using a combination of Cognitive Behavior Therapy and Mindfulness in a neuro-affirming, client directed format. Sharon has been providing training on autism and autism related topics for the last 15 years, throughout the county and internationally. She has co-authored two books and DVDs about using technology to support autistic people, entitled *Lights! Camera! Autism!*. As well as co-authoring a chapter in the text book: *Autism: The Movement Sensing Perspective*. In 2006, with Star Cinema, Sharon co-created the first "Sensory Friendly" movie going experience in the state of Wisconsin. Sharon is committed to increasing acceptance and possibilities for autistic people everywhere.



Lisa Hoeme, MS, LPC is a Licensed Professional Counselor, consultant, and presenter. She is a partner at Imagine a Child's Capacity where she has a clinical practice and provides training and consultation to schools, community agencies, other professionals, families and individuals seeking services. She has clinical experience serving an expansive range individuals and families, including autistic individuals and those with Down syndrome, traumatic brain injury, attention difficulties, obsessive compulsive disorder, anxiety, and depression. In her counseling practice, Lisa uses a variety of approaches, including mindfulness, cognitive behavior therapy, collaborative problem solving, expressive therapy techniques, yoga and interpersonal neurobiology. She uses these modalities as a catalyst to help clients work through difficult life experiences, develop effective coping and relaxation strategies and to express themselves authentically. Lisa is committed to helping those she supports to achieve personal growth and overall well-being using a positive, individualized and person-centered approach.

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