



Professional Training Program | Level I

The Complexities of Complex Trauma Part I

Curriculum for 2022

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Intended Participants: Licensed mental health professionals (psychiatrists, psychologists, clinical social workers, mental health counselors, accredited psychotherapists, etc.) who are interested in developing their skills in treating clients with complex trauma related disorders. For Part I of the course, there is no need to have a client with a complex trauma-related disorder.

Course Format: Six, two and a half hour sessions of literature discussion, lecture, discussion of a “teaching case” and discussion of participant cases.

Course Materials: Required textbooks are listed below and must be purchased by the participant. Additional materials including journal articles and handouts will be provided at no cost via the online course portal. Access to the course portal is provided upon registration.

Recommendation: We recommend that you join ISSTD. Membership in ISSTD gives you free access to every past issue of the *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation* and a wealth of clinical articles and discussions from past issues of ISSTD News.

Required Texts

1. Courtois, CA, and Ford, JD (2013) *Treatment of Complex Trauma: A Sequenced, Relationship-Based Approach*. NY, NY: The Guilford Press.
2. Courtois, CA, and Ford, JD, eds. (2020) *Treating Complex Traumatic Stress Disorders in Adults, second edition*. NY, NY: The Guilford Press.
3. Herman, JL (2015) *Trauma and Recovery: The aftermath of violence – from domestic abuse to political terror*. NY, NY: Basic Books.



Required Articles (Provided via Course Portal Upon Registration):

Classen, C.C., Muller, R.T., Field, N.P, Clark, C.S. & Stern, E.M. (2017) A naturalistic study of a brief treatment program for survivors of complex trauma, *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, 18:5, 720-734.

Freyd, JJ (1994) Betrayal Trauma: Traumatic Amnesia as an Adaptive Response to Childhood Abuse, *Ethics and Behavior*, 4(4), 307 – 329.

Gagnon, K.L., Lee, M.S. & DePrince, A.P. (2017) Victim–perpetrator dynamics through the lens of betrayal trauma theory, *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, 18:3, 373-382.

Giourou, E., Skokou, M., Andrew, S.P., Alexopoulou, K., Gourzis, P., and Jelastopulu, E. (2018) Complex posttraumatic stress disorder: The need to consolidate a distinct clinical syndrome or to reevaluate features of psychiatric disorders following interpersonal trauma? *World J Psychiatr* 2018 March 22; 8(1): 12-19 (open access)

Nagar, M., Nakash, O., and Westen, D. (2021) Unpacking childhood experiences of abuse: Can clinicians identify their patients' History of Abuse? *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, 21:3, 396-408

Zyromski, B., Dollarhide, C.T., Aras, Y., Geiger, S, Oehrtman, J.P., and Halley Clarke, H. (2018) Beyond Complex Trauma: An Existential View of Adverse Childhood Experiences, *Journal of Humanistic Counselling*, Oct. 2018, Vol. 57,156-172.

Additional Materials (Provided via Course Portal Upon Registration):

- DSM5: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Acute Stress Disorder
- PCL-C Checklist and scoring
- Pages from Trauma-Informed PA Plan Presentation CTIPP 4-21-21, ACEs (used with permission)
- PowerPoint presentation – Turkus on ACE studies
- The Case of Erica – Parts 1-4

The Complexities of Complex Trauma Part I

Session One: Trauma and Its History

Content Level: Beginning

Abstract: Complex trauma, now more widely acknowledged, has a history of being “known and not known” over several centuries. This contributes to the difficulties that those suffering from complex trauma encounter when seeking to be understood and treated. What are the differences between “simple” and “complex” trauma and what are the antecedents of trauma from “simple to complex”. Furthermore, how well do mental health professionals recognize a history of trauma, in its various forms, which might indicate complex trauma as a distinct clinical syndrome? Time will be given to discuss case material as it relates to the readings.

Objectives:

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Summarize the history of the understanding of trauma and the resistance to recognizing trauma in its many forms
- Define the differences between simple vs complex trauma
- Describe the antecedents of trauma – from simple to complex
- Discuss the recognition of a clinical syndrome resulting from childhood abuse

Readings:

1. Herman, JL (2015) *Trauma and Recovery: The aftermath of violence – from domestic abuse to political terror*. NY, NY: Basic Books, Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, pp. 1 – 95.
2. Courtois, CA, and Ford, JD (2020), *Defining and Understanding Complex Trauma and Complex Traumatic Stress Disorders*, (pp. 3 – 34) in CA Courtois and JD Ford, eds. *Treating Complex Traumatic Stress Disorders in Adults, second edition*. NY, NY: The Guilford Press.
3. Giourou, E., Skokou, M., Andrew, S.P., Alexopoulou, K., Gourzis, P., and Jelastopulu, E. (2018) Complex posttraumatic stress disorder: The need to consolidate a distinct clinical syndrome or to reevaluate features of psychiatric disorders following interpersonal trauma? *World J Psychiatr* 2018 March 22; 8(1): 12-19 (open access)

Timed Outline:

45 minutes: Discussion of Reading 1 - history of trauma

15 minutes: Discussion of Reading 2 - difference between simple and complex trauma

- 45 minutes: Discussion of Reading 2 - antecedents of simple to complex trauma
45 minutes: Discussion of Reading 3 - recognition of a clinical syndrome resulting from chronic childhood trauma
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Session Two: Developmental Implications of Childhood Abuse, Neglect, Betrayal

Content Level: Beginning and Intermediate

Abstract: By definition, complex trauma begins in childhood and continues over time. In this session, we will explore the outcomes of trauma at different developmental stages of childhood. Often, adults seeking therapy will not volunteer that they had a history of childhood abuse, but there are a number of symptoms that indicate a history of childhood trauma, which will be explored. The theory of betrayal trauma, as defined by Freyd, and its implications memory and dissociation will be discussed. Time will be given to discuss case material as it relates to the readings.

Objectives:

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify the outcomes of trauma at different developmental stages during childhood
- Describe the symptoms in adults that indicate a further exploration for childhood trauma
- Define and discuss the impact of betrayal trauma on children, and especially memory and the development of dissociative symptoms, including amnesia
- Discuss the role of betrayal trauma and victim-perpetrator dynamics within betrayal trauma theory

Readings:

1. Herman, JL (2015) *Trauma and Recovery: The aftermath of violence – from domestic abuse to political terror*. NY, NY: Basic Books, Chapter 5, pp. 96 – 114.
2. Courtois, CA, and Ford, JD (2013) *Treatment of Complex Trauma: A Sequenced, Relationship-Based Approach*. NY, NY: The Guilford Press. Chapter 1, pp. 3 – 27.
3. Nagar, M., Nakash, O., and Westen, D. (2021) Unpacking childhood experiences of abuse: Can clinicians identify their patients' History of Abuse? *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, 21:3, 396-408
4. Freyd, JJ (1994) Betrayal Trauma: Traumatic Amnesia as an Adaptive Response to Childhood Abuse, *Ethics and Behavior*, 4(4), 307 – 329.

5. Gagnon, K.L., Lee, M.S. & DePrince, A.P. (2017) Victim–perpetrator dynamics through the lens of betrayal trauma theory, *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, 18:3, 373-382.

Timed Outline:

- 30 minutes: Discussion of Reading 1 and 2 - outcomes of childhood trauma
30 minutes: Discussion of Reading 3 - indicators of childhood trauma in adult patients
45 minutes: Discussion of Reading 4 - impact of betrayal on memory and amnesia
45 minutes: Discussion of Reading 5 - how victim-perpetrator dynamics impact childhood psychological development.
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Session Three: Assessment for Trauma-based Disorders

Content Level: Beginning and Intermediate

Abstract: Complex trauma incorporates the symptoms of simple PTSD and additional symptomatology. In this session, we will review the complexities of the symptom profile of Complex PTSD and we will develop a conceptual understanding, including presenting symptoms often found in other diagnoses across the DSM-5. We will review various assessment tools and measures and discuss their uses. Discussion of the ACE Studies, which elucidates the impact of childhood adversity on the development of complex trauma symptoms, will include some updates and recommendations for use. Time will be given to discuss “The Case of Erica” and the development of an “index of suspicion.”

Objectives:

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Discuss the DSM-5 diagnosis of PTSD and the symptoms of trauma, including other disorders where trauma may be a major factor
- Discuss evidence-based measures of complex trauma and sequelae of childhood abuse
- Explain the ACE studies, and their implications in the understanding and treatment of complex trauma
- Define “index of suspicion” and how it can be applied to clinical work, using “The Case of Erica”

Readings:

1. Herman, JL (2015) *Trauma and Recovery: The aftermath of violence – from domestic abuse to political terror*. NY, NY: Basic Books, Chapter 6, pp. 115 – 129.

2. Courtois, CA, and Ford, JD (2013) *Treatment of Complex Trauma: A Sequenced, Relationship-Based Approach*. NY, NY: The Guilford Press. Chapter 2, pp. 28 – 42.
3. Spinazzola, J. and Briere, J. (2020) Evidence-based psychological Assessment of the Sequelae of Complex Trauma, in Courtois, CA, and Ford, JD, eds. (2020) *Treating Complex Traumatic Stress Disorders in Adults, second edition*. NY, NY: The Guilford Press, pp. 125-148.
4. The ACE studies
5. Zyromski, B., Dollarhide, C.T., Aras, Y., Geiger, S, Oehrtman, J.P., and Halley Clarke, H. (2018) Beyond Complex Trauma: An Existential View of Adverse Childhood Experiences, *Journal of Humanistic Counselling*, Oct. 2018, Vol. 57,156-172.

Additional Materials

- PTSD checklist-civilian (PCL-C) – public domain
- PowerPoint presentation – Turkus on ACE studies
- Pages from Trauma-Informed PA Plan Presentation CTIPP 4-21-21, ACEs (used with permission)
- The Case of Erica: Part 1

Timed Outline:

- 45 minutes: Discussion of Readings 1, 2, 3 - complex trauma and the role of trauma in other disorders and symptoms
- 30 minutes: Discussion of Readings 4 and 5 - the ACE studies and their use in understanding and treating complex trauma
- 60 minutes: Discussion of the Case of Erica, Part 1 and develop an “index of suspicion”

Session Four: Overview of Psychotherapy for Complex Trauma

Content Level: Beginning and Intermediate

Abstract: A phase-oriented approach is the cornerstone of complex trauma treatment. In this session, we will review the three phases of the phase oriented approach including phase one - symptom management and safety/stabilization; phase two - trauma memory and processing; and phase three - consolidation/integration of therapeutic gains. We will develop an understanding for the use of this approach. We will discuss both the goals and the challenges that often occur during the early phase of treatment. Time will be given to discuss “The Case of Erica” and clinical interventions in the beginning stage of therapy for complex trauma.

Objectives:

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Outline phase-oriented (or sequenced) therapy
- Discuss the rationale behind phase-oriented (or sequenced) therapy
- Describe the early stage of the first phase of therapy
- Discuss, using “The Case of Erica”, clinical interventions in the beginning stage of treatment of complex trauma

Readings:

1. Herman, JL (2015) *Trauma and Recovery: The aftermath of violence – from domestic abuse to political terror*. NY, NY: Basic Books, Chapter 7, pp. 133 – 154.
2. Courtois, CA, and Ford, JD (2013) *Treatment of Complex Trauma: A Sequenced, Relationship-Based Approach*. NY, NY: The Guilford Press. Chapter 3, pp. 53 – 87.
3. Courtois, CA, and Ford, JD (2013) *Treatment of Complex Trauma: A Sequenced, Relationship-Based Approach*. NY, NY: The Guilford Press. Chapter 4, pp. 88 – 119.
4. Classen, C.C., Muller, R.T., Field, N.P, Clark, C.S. & Stern, E.M. (2017) A naturalistic study of a brief treatment program for survivors of complex trauma, *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, 18:5, 720-734.

Additional Materials:

The Case of Erica: Part 2

Timed Outline:

45 minutes: Discussion of Readings 1, 2, 3 - phase oriented therapy for trauma and its rationale

30 minutes: Discussion of Readings 1, 2, 3 - the early stage of phase one therapy

15 minutes: Discussion of Reading 4 - a specific treatment program

60 minutes: Discussion of the Case of Erica, Part 2 and clinical interventions in the beginning stage of treatment of complex trauma

Session Five: The First Phase of Treatment of Complex Trauma

Content Level: Beginning and Intermediate

Abstract: The first phase of treatment is essential in establishing safety, self-regulation, self-control and development of trust in the therapeutic relationship. This phase sets the stage for future processing of traumatic material giving the client the tools to cope with distressing traumatic material. The therapist is taxed with creating a stable and

consistent environment for which the client can feel safe to learn self-regulating strategies. Common pitfalls of early stage treatment are identified and explored in this session. Time will be given to discuss “The Case of Erica” and clinical interventions and therapeutic modalities in phase one of therapy

Objectives:

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Explain the competencies to be achieved in the first phase of therapy
- Discuss the therapeutic alliance and frame in the first phase of therapy
- Describe the common pitfalls of early stage therapy with complex trauma
- Discuss, using “The Case of Erica”, clinical interventions in the phase one of treatment of complex trauma, utilizing various treatment modalities

Readings:

1. Herman, JL (2015) *Trauma and Recovery: The aftermath of violence – from domestic abuse to political terror*. NY, NY: Basic Books, Chapter 8, pp. 155 – 174.
2. Courtois, CA, and Ford, JD (2013) *Treatment of Complex Trauma: A Sequenced, Relationship-Based Approach*. NY, NY: The Guilford Press, Chapter 5, pp. 120 – 143.
3. Courtois, CA (2020), *Therapeutic Alliance and Risk Management (pp. 99 – 124)* in CA Courtois and JD Ford, eds. *Treating Complex Traumatic Stress Disorders in Adults, second edition*. NY, NY: The Guilford Press.

Additional Materials:

The Case of Erica: Part 3

Timed Outline:

- 45 minutes: Discussion of Readings 1 and 2 - competencies in phase one, including safety and stabilization
- 45 minutes: Discussion of Reading 3 - therapeutic relationship, and common pitfalls
- 60 minutes: Discussion of the Case of Erica, Part 3 and clinical interventions and therapeutic modalities in phase one

Session Six: The Second and Third Phases of Treatment of Complex Trauma

Content Level: Beginning and intermediate

Abstract: Once a client is able to establish a reasonable pattern of safety and stabilization movement into the second phase treatment can begin. This phase focuses

on processing the traumatic memories. There is often a need to return or remind the client of phase one coping strategies when processing traumatic material in phase two. Phase three of treatment focuses on the integration of material processed in phase two into present and future life. Time will be given to discuss “The Case of Erica” and clinical interventions in the second and third phases of therapy.

Objectives:

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Discuss the second phase of treatment including criteria for moving from the first to second phase as well as working through traumatic memory
- Discuss the third phase of therapy and the process of termination
- Describe the complex nature of the phase-oriented therapy rather than a linear progressive treatment
- Discuss the second and third phases of therapy, using the Case of Erica

Readings:

1. Herman, JL (2015) *Trauma and Recovery: The aftermath of violence – from domestic abuse to political terror*. NY, NY: Basic Books, Chapters 9 & 10, pp. 175 – 213.
2. Courtois, CA, and Ford, JD (2013) *Treatment of Complex Trauma: A Sequenced, Relationship-Based Approach*. NY, NY: The Guilford Press, Chapter 6, pp. 144 – 189.

Additional Materials:

The Case of Erica: Part 4

Timed Outline:

- 45 minutes: Discussion of Readings 1 (chapter 9) and 2 - second phase of therapy and working with traumatic memory
- 30 minutes: Discussion of Readings 1 (chapter 10) and 2 - third phase of therapy
- 15 minutes: Discussion of Readings 1 and 2 - the complex nature of phase-oriented therapy
- 75 minutes: Discussion of the Case of Erica, Part 4 and clinical interventions in the second and third phases of therapy



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