

Trauma-Informed Clinical Supervisor Training

(30-Hour Course)

Instructors: Shirley Porter, M.Ed., RP and Jen Freedy, M.Ed., RSW

Course Dates: Wednesday, September 16 – Wednesday, November 18, 2026

Format: 10 weekly sessions (3 hours each)

Delivery: Live Online (Zoom) and On-Demand (Recorded Video)

Total Hours: 30 hours

Competency: Meets outlined CRPO (College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario) requirements for Clinical Supervision education

Course Admission Requirements:

- Currently practicing psychotherapy
- Currently registered and in good standing with one (or more) of the following colleges:
 - College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario
 - College of Nurses of Ontario
 - College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario
 - College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario
 - College of Psychologists of Ontario
 - Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers
 - Or similar in province/state of residence
- Have at least 5 years of extensive service practicing psychotherapy
- Have completed at least 1000 direct client contact hours and 150 hours of clinical supervision within the scope of practice of psychotherapy

Course Description

This 30-hour advanced training equips clinical supervisors with the knowledge, confidence, and skill to integrate trauma-informed, polyvagal, and parts-based frameworks into supervision practice. Participants learn to create supervisory environments that foster safety, empowerment, and trust — essential for supervisees working with trauma-impacted clients.

The course blends neuroscience, ethics, reflective practice, and somatic frameworks to support supervisors in providing compassionate, effective, and regulation-informed supervision.

Emphasis is placed on preventing vicarious trauma and burnout, enhancing supervisee development through reflective supervision, strengthening ethical and cultural competence, and applying trauma-informed case conceptualization in complex client situations.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, participants will be able to:

1. Define trauma-informed supervision and describe the principles that support psychological safety, collaboration, and effective learning within supervisory relationships.
2. Recognize how trauma and nervous system activation can influence both clinicians and clients, and how these dynamics may appear within the supervisory relationship and working alliance.
3. Apply nervous system-informed perspectives, somatic frameworks and tools, and parts work concepts to supervision and trauma-informed case conceptualization.
4. Conceptualize client difficulties from an adaptation-based rather than pathology-based model, recognizing protective responses and defense mechanisms as survival strategies.
5. Integrate reflective practice, relational awareness, and the safe and effective use of self in supervision conversations.
6. Identify and address vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and burnout in supervisors and supervisees, with attention to monitoring, regulation, and prevention.
7. Apply culturally responsive and equity-informed perspectives within supervision and clinical decision-making.
8. Support clinicians working with crisis, high-risk, or complex trauma presentations through structured supervision, collaborative reflection, and thoughtful pacing.
9. Facilitate supervisee growth through trauma-informed feedback, attention to nervous system readiness, and developmentally appropriate supervisory support.
10. Integrate trauma theory, nervous system awareness, parts-based understanding, and supervision practices into a coherent framework for trauma-informed clinical supervision.

Course Requirements and Structure

Attendance Policy Attendance at all live sessions is required for certification. If a class is missed, participants must watch the full class recording, which will be made available each Thursday following Wednesday's session. Viewing the recording and completing the associated reflection exercises ensures full participation credit for the missed class.

Class slides for the upcoming week will be sent each Tuesday prior. Participants are expected to review the materials in advance of the next session to enhance engagement and application. Any readings not in the textbook, will be sent out (in PDF form), the Thursday prior to the next class.

Evaluation Components

1. *Attendance and Participation (25%)*: Live attendance and active participation and/or verified completion of recordings.
2. *Reflective Assignments*:
 - Due week 4 – **Sunday, October 11, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.** (25%): Reflect upon how your clinical supervision approach is evolving - in terms of specific theoretical approach and planned applications. 750-1000 words each (i.e., 3-4 pages double spaced).
 - Due week 8 - **Due Sunday, November 8, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.** (25%): As we near the completion of the course, reflect upon where you started, and describe the areas you have noticed growth and development. 750-1000 words each (i.e., 3-4 pages double spaced).
3. *Final Multiple-Choice Test (25%)*: The final course test will be online and open-book, designed to evaluate integration and application of course concepts. Participants will have two hours to complete the test within a designated window, and a minimum grade of 70% is required to pass.

Course Text

Thiessen, E. W. (2023). A clinical supervision training handbook: Becoming a reflective systemic supervisor. Tellwell Talent

Course Schedule

Class 1 – Foundations of Clinical and Trauma-Informed Supervision

September 16 | Instructor: Jen

In Class One, you'll learn what good clinical supervision actually looks like and how we can bring a truly trauma-informed lens into the way we understand supervisees, their clients, and the work happening between them. We'll look at both the micro level - what's happening in the room, in the relationships, and in the nervous systems of all three parties in a supervision room. We'll also look at the macro level of supervision including ethics, professional responsibility, culture, power, and the impact of larger systems. We'll also look at and explore the ten core foundations of trauma-informed supervision, including safety, pacing, attachment, transference and countertransference, rupture and repair, shame, dissociation, nervous-system awareness, and sustainability. Most importantly, we'll explore how these ideas help you become a more thoughtful, confident supervisor who can support supervisees to slow down, think more deeply, and work more safely and effectively with complex clients.

Pre-Class Reading:

- Review ethics and supervision standards from your professional college or association.
- Thiessen, E. W. (2023). The basic elements of supervision. In *A clinical supervision training handbook: Becoming a reflective systemic supervisor* (pp. 9–51). Tellwell Talent.

Class 2 – Ethical and Legal Standards in Trauma-Informed Supervision

September 23 | Instructor: Shirley

In class four, we'll explore key ethical, professional practice, and legal principles guiding supervision through a trauma-informed lens. Topics covered include informed consent, the supervision contract, documentation, mandatory reporting, conflict of interest, and dual relationships. Participants will discuss and practice how to implement these principles while considering several supervision case studies.

Pre-Class Reading:

- Thiessen, E. W. (2023). Ethically informed supervision and legal issues. In A clinical supervision training handbook: Becoming a reflective systemic supervisor (pp. 123–155). Tellwell Talent.

Class 3 – (Complex) Trauma and Its Impact in Supervision

September 30 | Instructor: Jen

In class two, you'll learn more about what trauma actually does to the brain, body, nervous system, and sense of self, and why that matters so much in both therapy and supervision. We'll go in-depth with the Polyvagal Theory of trauma, and make practical and easy to understand. We'll look at the nuances of fight, flight, freeze-shutdown, social engagement, neuroception, and the Window of Tolerance so you can better recognize what's happening underneath a client's behaviour. We'll then connect this with Parts Work, exploring Child Parts (that carry the pain), Protector Parts (that are highly self-protective), and the Adult and Core parts of Self (the Engager Parts), and how each of these can either support healing, or sometimes keep therapy stuck. Together, we'll look at how to help supervisees understand trauma responses with more curiosity, and less pathologizing while choosing integrational interventions that match where the client's nervous system actually is, especially when working with complex trauma. This is important because when we understand what's happening underneath the symptoms, we're much better able to help supervisees slow the work down, recognize protection rather than resistance, and support deeper, safer, and lasting change.

Pre-Class Reading:

- Fisher, J. (2001). Dissociative phenomena in the everyday lives of trauma survivors. Paper presented at the Boston University Medical School Psychological Trauma Conference, Boston, MA.

Class 4 – Reflective Practice in Supervision

October 7 | Instructor: Shirley

In class five, we'll experientially explore reflective supervision models, including Gibbs and Kolb, and discuss when, how, and why to integrate trauma-informed reflective practice for ongoing supervisee (and our own) development and growth. Participants will identify ways to support safe and effective use of self, both within and outside of supervision. Reflective supervision models will be applied to case studies.

Pre-Class Reading:

- Davys, A., and Beddoe, L. (2010). A reflective learning model in supervision. In *Best practice in professional supervision: A guide for the helping professions* (2nd ed., pp. 116–135). Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Class 5 – Creating a Safe Supervisory Environment and Preventing Burnout

October 14 | Instructor: Jen

In class three, you'll learn how much of supervision is really about relationships - not just talking through cases. We'll look at the three-way relationship between the client, supervisee, and supervisor, and explore how dynamics from therapy can show up again in supervision. We'll talk about building a strong supervisory alliance, creating enough safety for supervisees to be honest about mistakes and uncertainty, and working thoughtfully with things like attachment, power and authority, shame, conflict, and the reactions that both supervisors and supervisees bring into the room. We'll also look closely at the impact this work can have on us as therapists and supervisors, including burnout, vicarious trauma, and secondary traumatic stress - how to tell them apart, how they can show up in the nervous system, clinical work, and personal life, and how supervision can help us notice and respond to them earlier. This is important because the quality of the supervisory relationship directly affects how openly a supervisee can learn and reflect, while recognizing the emotional cost of trauma work helps us protect the therapist, the supervisor, and ultimately the client.

Pre-Class Readings:

- Thiessen, E. W. (2023). The supervisory relationship. In *A clinical supervision training handbook: Becoming a reflective systemic supervisor* (pp. 91–122). Tellwell Talent.

Class 6 – Somatic Awareness and Working with the Body and Nervous System

October 21 | Instructor: Jen

This session introduces a Somatic Experiencing-informed framework, SIBAM-ALLOW, as a practical tool for trauma-informed supervision and clinical practice. Participants will learn how to access and work with the lower right-brain, embodied nervous system experiences through sensations, emotions, body and behaviour impulses, imagery, and meaning-making. This tool can help clinicians and supervisees better understand what is unfolding in both therapy and supervision. By slowing down and noticing issues that may not easily emerge through thinking and discussion alone, this process can support nervous system regulation, deepen case understanding, and help mobilize supervisees and clients when therapy or supervision feels stuck.

Pre-Class Reading:

- Freedy, J. (2026). *Reclaiming what was lost: A woman's guide to healing childhood sexual trauma through parts work therapy, somatic methods, and polyvagal principles*. New Harbinger Publications. Chapters 8 and 9.

Class 7 – Trauma-Informed Case Conceptualization in Supervision

October 28 | Instructor: Jen

Today, you'll learn how to help supervisees more effectively conceptualize complex cases, especially when therapy feels stuck, repetitive, confusing, or isn't progressing as expected. We'll look at gathering the right history, choosing modalities that fit the client's stage and needs, and understanding four key areas of experience: thoughts, feelings, behaviours, and autonomic nervous system state. Using the I.M.S.T.U.C.K. model, we'll explore immobility, modalities, state-speed/stability/splits, timing, unspoken material, connection, and knowledge gaps. This includes neuroception, protective and child parts, pacing and readiness, attachment and therapeutic relationship factors, relational dynamics such as the Karpman Drama Triangle, and whether a different treatment focus may be needed. We'll also look at why a client may rationally want a goal while their nervous system or protective parts experience that same change as unsafe. This class will help supervisors widen the lens, identify what may be keeping the work stuck, and make clearer decisions about pacing and treatment direction.

Pre-Class Reading:

- Fisher, J. (2013). Trauma-informed stabilization treatment: A new approach to treating unsafe behaviors. *Journal of Trauma and Dissociation*, 14(2), 1–16.

Class 8 – Cultural Sensitivity and Awareness in Trauma-Informed Supervision

November 4 | Instructor: Shirley

In this class, we will explore the importance of intentional cultural awareness and sensitivity in clinical supervision and acknowledge how culture influences trauma experiences and can impact the supervisory relationship. Participants will work on bringing unconscious biases into consciousness, and we will identify strategies to address unconscious bias, countertransference, and internal values conflicts - while integrating cultural awareness and humility into supervision.

Pre-Class Reading:

- Thiessen, E. W. (2023). Culture, diversity, and social justice in supervision. In *A clinical supervision training handbook: Becoming a reflective systemic supervisor* (pp. 241–281). Tellwell Talent.

Class 9 – Supervising Crisis and High-Risk Cases

November 11 | Instructor: Shirley

This session will explore supervision strategies for supervisees working with high-risk clients. We'll look at how to help supervisees to differentiate between suicidality and self-harm, apply risk assessment protocols, create a safety plan, and identify the criteria necessary to warrant mandatory reporting. We will identify practical ways to provide trauma-informed containment and care supervisees, and their clients, during crises.

Pre-Class Reading:

- Knox, S., Burkard, A. W., Jackson, J. A., Schaack, A. M., and Hess, S. A. (2006). Therapists-in-training who experience a client suicide: Implications for supervision. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 37(5), 547.

Class 10 – Moving from Therapist to Clinical Supervisor

November 18 | Instructor: Shirley

In this final session, participants will synthesize the trauma-informed supervision concepts covered throughout the course into a personal supervision philosophy. Supervisors will engage in reflective activities as they notice shifts in their learning, thinking, and professional identity. We'll also address ways continue enhancing your learning, knowledge, skills, and abilities as clinical supervisors. In response to several questions on the topic, we will consider the differences in supervisor responsibilities in working with students on clinical placement, versus therapists who have already graduated from their programs.

Pre-Class Reading:

- Thiessen, E. W. (2023). Lifelong learning for systemic supervisors. In *A clinical supervision training handbook: Becoming a reflective systemic supervisor* (pp. 283–318). Tellwell Talent.

Earning Your Certificate

Upon successful completion of attendance and the final online multiple-choice test, participants will receive a Certificate of Completion confirming 30 hours of Clinical Supervisor Training.