

2026 Avanti Therapeutic Projects Symposium

Course C: The Convergence of Sensory Integration Theory and Polyvagal Theory in Clinical Practice

Tracy Stackhouse, MA, OTR

Saturday February 28th, 2026; 8:30 a.m - 4:00 p.m. CST

Location: Live webinar via Zoom; on-demand via Thinkific for 45 days; recordings will be released within 1 week of the event.
6 Contact hours

Audience: OTs, SLPs, PTs, mental health professionals, and interested others



Course Description:

Sensation is integral to our neural processes, including our regulation capacities. Regulation is grounded in a felt sense of safety, which gives rise to the possibility for engagement and exploration. As we think about how the nervous system utilizes sensation for detection and the production of adaptive responses, we begin to understand the complex relationship between our sensory and regulatory capacities. This presentation will review key concepts from Polyvagal Theory and Sensory Integration Theory in order to understand their foundational roles in practice. In addition, we will explore the converging relationship between PVT and SI from both theoretical and therapeutic lenses. This discussion will include consideration of co-regulation and the importance of ensuring sensory interventions are delivered within the context of relationship. Participants will have opportunities to engage in learning activities designed to support the integration of the lecture material into your everyday practice.

Course Objectives:

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

1. Identify the key principles of Polyvagal Theory.
2. Explain the contributions of sensory discrimination and sensory modulation to felt safety.
3. Describe the relationship between sensation and neuroception.
4. Implement principles of co-regulation in practice.

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Course C: Agenda	
8:30 AM - 8:50 AM CST	Welcome, Introductions, & Why Polyvagal Theory
8:50 AM - 9:30 AM CST	Key Concepts of Polyvagal Theory (PVT)
9:30 AM - 10:00 AM CST	Key Concepts of Sensory Integration (SI) Theory
10:00 AM - 10:15 AM CST	Break
10:15 AM - 11:00 AM CST	Convergence of Theories: Sensation and Neuroception
11:00 AM - 11:45 PM CST	Neuroception and Felt Safety: Sensory Modulation & Sensory Discrimination
11:45 AM - 12:45 PM CST	Lunch Break
**12:30 PM - 12:45 PM CST	** Optional: return early from lunch to hear about Camp Avanti (for campers and OTs)
12:45 PM - 1:30 PM CST	Autonomic Hierarchy: Understanding Sensory Modulation & Regulation
1:30 PM - 2:15 PM CST	The Role of Relationship & Co-Regulation in Therapy
2:15 PM - 2:30 PM CST	Break
2:30 PM - 3:45 PM CST	PVT + SI Informed Intervention: Building Capacity for Safety & Integration
3:45 PM - 4:00 PM CST	Closing Discussion, Integration, and Next Steps
4:00 PM CST	Adjourn

Speaker Biography:

Tracy Stackhouse, MA, OTR is an occupational therapist recognized internationally for her expertise in Fragile X syndrome, neurodevelopment, sensory integration, polyvagal theory, and relationship-based practices. She is the co-founder and Director of Innovation at Developmental FX, a nonprofit clinic and training organization dedicated to supporting children and families through relationship-based, neuroscience-informed care. With over four decades of experience, Tracy has worked alongside families, educators, researchers, and therapists to translate complex science into practical strategies that foster growth, resilience, and engaged belonging. She is a frequent presenter at national and international conferences, a co-author of key clinical resources, and a trusted mentor to professionals worldwide.

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