**AGPA Connect 2023 Presenter Information**

**Course Code:** 208 (Virtual)

**Course Title:** Somatic Embodiment in Group Psychotherapy

**Course Times:** 7:00 – 8:00 AM

**Course Dates:** Friday, March 10

**Instructors:** Boaz Feldman

**Course Description:** Our physiology is deeply impacted by the quality of our relationships: Social Baseline Theory (Cohen & Sbarra, 2011) and Polyvagal Theory (Porges, 2001) are evidence-based neurophysiological models offering deep insight on the way groups impact clients' nervous systems during psychotherapy sessions. We will look at how we can create relational contexts of safety and social engagement by (i) exploring the role of the therapeutic alliance, (ii) modelling specific relational skills in the group and (iii) normalization interventions to mimic evolutionary learning environments.

**Learning Objectives**

The attendee will be able to:‎

1. ‎Apply three tools for neuroceptive safety in group therapy.‎
2. ‎Identify clients' nonverbal signals of nervous system states to better attune.‎
3. ‎Elaborate three key questions they can ask their clients to support alliance-building.‎
4. ‎State the simple principles for psycho-physiological safety.‎

**Significant Articles:**

1. Beckes, L., & Sbarra, D. A. (2022). Social baseline theory: State of the science and new directions. ‎Current Opinion in Psychology, 43, 36-41.‎
2. Cohen, S. L. (2011). Coming to our senses: The application of somatic psychology to group ‎psychotherapy. International Journal of Group Psychotherapy, 61(3), 396-413.‎
3. Flores, P. J., & Porges, S. W. (2017). Group psychotherapy as a neural exercise: Bridging polyvagal ‎theory and attachment theory. International Journal of Group Psychotherapy, 67(2), 202-222.‎
4. Paulick, J., Deisenhofer, A. K., Ramseyer, F., Tschacher, W., Boyle, K., Rubel, J., & Lutz, W. (2018). ‎Nonverbal synchrony: A new approach to better understand psychotherapeutic processes and drop-‎out. Journal of psychotherapy integration, 28(3).‎
5. Wilson, D. S., & Coan, J. A. (2021). Groups as organisms: Implications for therapy and training. Clinical ‎Psychology Review, 85, 101987.‎

**Agenda:**

Our physiology is deeply impacted by the quality of our relationships: the Social Baseline Theory (Cohen & Sbarra, 2011) and the Polyvagal Theory (Porges, 2001) are evidence-based neurophysiological models offering deep insight on the way groups impact clients' nervous systems during psychotherapy sessions. In this presentation, we will look at how group psychotherapy can create relational contexts of safety and social engagement by

1. exploring the role of the therapeutic alliance
2. priming and modelling specific relational skills in the group and
3. normalization interventions to mimic evolutionary learning environments

Neuroscientific insights to reframe our evolutionary origins (30 min, Lecture)

Evolutionary history & social/cultural influences

Short thought experiment

Nervous system dynamics (Polyvagal theory & Social Baseline Theory)

Relevance for small process groups

Somatic dynamics of the therapeutic alliance

Relevance of self-regulation, co-regulation & nonverbal signals in small groups Clinical Case Study: an online process group during COVID (15 min, Case Study with audiovisual video) Q&A (10 min) Participant Evaluations (5 min)

**Assessment Questions:**

Question 1 (include possible answers)

Can a group be conceived and experienced as a wider sense of our own self? -No -Yes, all the time -Yes, depending on how safe we feel

Correct Answer 1

-Yes, depending on how safe we feel

Question 2 (include possible answers)

What are some of the psycho-physiological consequences of feeling belonging in a wider sense of self with others? -reduced glucose consumption -increased Hypothalamic-Pituary-Adrenal axis activation -Social engagement system comes online

Correct Answer 2

-reduced glucose consumption & -Social engagement system comes online

Question 3 (include possible answers)

What is neuroception? -it is a very rapid evaluation assessing how safe we feel -it is a slow emotional function that explores feelings -it is a complex capacity to understand others feelings

Correct Answer 3

-it is a very rapid evaluation assessing how safe we feel

Question 4 (include possible answers)

What are the specific elements of the therapeutic alliance? -Collaborative goal-setting, agreement on interventions & effective bond between client and therapist -Love, compassion and assertiveness between client and therapist -Attuned nonverbal joining

Correct Answer 4

-Collaborative goal-setting, agreement on interventions & effective bond between client and therapist & -Attuned nonverbal joining

Question 5 (include possible answers)

How does the therapeutic alliance help nervous system regulation? -it helps clients orient to the present moment by feeling more safe -it prevents clients from being angry at all times -It helps develop insight

Correct Answer 5

-it helps clients orient to the present moment by feeling more safe

Question 6 (include possible answers)

What are some of the nonverbal indicators of a participant going into freeze? -sitting at a distance and having very few facial expressions -gesturing at what is being shared -their face is getting red

Correct Answer 6

-sitting at a distance and having very few facial expressions

Question 7 (include possible answers)

What is therapeutic presence? -the capacity to embody qualities of unconditional positive regard, empathy and congruence -being joyful during the whole group -being int touch with one's own emotions as we facilitate sessions

Correct Answer 7

-the capacity to embody qualities of unconditional positive regard, empathy and congruence & -being int touch with one's own emotions as we facilitate sessions

Question 8 (include possible answers)

What is a relational skill we can encourage participants to develop that is helpful for group coherence? -asking for someone to attune to us and join us when we share something vulnerable -sharing one's opinion without consideration for what has been said -letting participants speak angrily and uninterruptedly for a long time

Correct Answer 8

-asking for someone to attune to us and join us when we share something vulnerable

Question 9 (include possible answers)

What is the highest regulated state of the nervous system? -Orientation -Fight -Flight -Social Engagement

Correct Answer 9

-Social Engagement

Question 10 (include possible answers)

Is feeling good important in therapy? -Yes because it acts as a coping mechanism for difficult emotions -No, it's not important in therapy -No, it actually prevents clients from understanding their shadows

Correct Answer 10

-Yes because it acts as a coping mechanism for difficult emotions