

Chronic Pain and the Brain: Therapeutic Tools for Reducing and Coping with Pain

Chronic pain extends far beyond the body—it reshapes how clients think, feel, and engage with the world. This workshop invites therapists to examine the complex interplay between physical pain and psychological health, exploring how conditions such as anxiety and depression intersect with the lived experience of chronic pain. Participants will gain a clear understanding of the brain-body connection, including how the brain processes pain and how emotional and cognitive factors influence its intensity and persistence.

Through a blend of science and practice, attendees will learn to differentiate between structural pain and neural circuit-related pain, and explore treatment strategies from evidence-based interventions such as Pain Reprocessing Therapy (PRT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). Designed for immediate clinical application, this workshop moves beyond theory to offer tangible tools, case examples, and experiential exercises that therapists can bring directly into their sessions.

Participants will learn how to tailor pain management strategies that address both the physical and emotional dimensions of pain, integrating multiple therapeutic approaches to deliver holistic, mind-body care. By the end of the training, therapists will leave with practical frameworks and interventions to help clients reclaim agency, reduce suffering, and improve quality of life through a comprehensive, integrative approach to pain treatment.

Target Audience
Psychologists Social Workers Counselors
Therapists Psychiatrists Nurses
Course level: Intermediate

Learning Objectives
At the end of this seminar, participants will be able to:
1. Identify and describe the most common contributors to chronic pain, including biological, psychological, and social factors.
2. Explain the neural and physiological mechanisms that underlie pain perception in the brain and body.
3. Differentiate between structural pain and neuroplastic (neural circuit) pain, recognizing their distinct clinical implications.
4. Describe frequent comorbid psychological conditions—such as anxiety, depression, and trauma-related symptoms—that often accompany chronic pain.
5. Utilize major evidence-based approaches, including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), and Pain Reprocessing Therapy (PRT), conceptualize and address chronic pain with clients.

Seminar Schedule
The webinar outline is attached. See the Live Webinar page for the start and end times.

Outline
10:00a EST: Begin

Introduction and Overview
Understanding Chronic Pain in the Brain and Body
The Causes of Chronic Pain

11:30a: Break (15 min)

Structural vs. Neuroplastic Pain

1:00p: Lunch Break (1/2 hr)

Co-Morbid Psychological Conditions and Chronic Pain
Treatment Modalities for Chronic Pain

3:15 PM: Break
Treatment Modalities Continued
Closing Thoughts and Q&A

5:00pm: Ends

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The Presenter

Corey Petersen, PhD, LCMFT is a clinical psychotherapist, educator, and owner of Communication and Connection Therapy. She earned her Ph.D. in Communication Studies from the University of Kansas, where her research centered on psychotherapeutic language and communication ethics. In addition to her doctorate, Dr. Petersen holds dual Master's degrees in Marriage and Family Therapy and Professional Communication, reflecting her unique integration of psychological and communication sciences.

With over nine years of collegiate teaching experience in communication and psychology, Dr. Petersen brings both academic rigor and real-world insight to her work. She is a published researcher and sought-after continuing education and corporate trainer, known for bridging research, theory, and clinical practice in accessible, engaging ways that help professionals communicate and connect more effectively.

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This seminar has been reviewed and approved by Keith Hannan, Ph.D., Laura Davie, LICSW, Tina Jenkins, Psy.D., and Loreen Yearick, MSN, RN. This approval expires on March 1, 2028.

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