

Therapy with Kids with Big, Baffling Behaviors

Detailed Training Agenda

Dates: June 1-2, 2026

Location: New York

Instructors: Robyn Gobbel, MSW & Rose LaPiere, LPC, RPT-S, ACS

Total CE Hours: 11 hours

Target Audience: Intermediate level professionals working therapeutically with children

DAY 1 - Monday, June 1, 2026

8:30 AM - 9:00 AM | Registration & Welcome (30 minutes)

- Participant check-in
- Distribution of materials
- Light breakfast and networking

9:00 AM - 10:30 AM | Session 1: Foundations of Understanding Baffling Behaviors (1.5 hours)

Learning Objectives Addressed:

- LO #1: Explain how bringing coherence to symptoms can reduce burnout
- LO #2: Describe challenging behaviors through the lens of the nervous system and relational neuroscience

Content:

- Welcome and introductions (10 min)
- Why we're here: The challenge of baffling behaviors and therapist burnout (15 min)
- Introduction to Interpersonal Neurobiology (IPNB) (20 min)
 - Integration: Linkage of differentiated parts
 - Complex systems theory
 - River of integration vs. rigidity/chaos
- Relational Neuroscience: We shape one another's brains (20 min)
 - Connection as a biological imperative
 - The brain develops inside connection
 - Relational interdependence
- No Behavior is Maladaptive: Behavior Makes Sense (15 min)
 - Changing how we see people changes people
 - "X-Ray Vision Goggles" - looking beneath the surface
- Small group discussion: Reflect on a "baffling behavior" through this new lens (10 min)

10:30 AM - 10:45 AM | BREAK (15 minutes)

10:45 AM - 12:00 PM | Session 2: The Three Pathways & Neuroception (1.25 hours)

Learning Objectives Addressed:

- LO #2: Describe challenging behaviors through the lens of the nervous system and relational neuroscience

- LO #3: Teach a playful paradigm to help therapists, parents, and kids make sense of baffling behaviors

Content:

- Regulated, Connected Children Behave Well (10 min)
 - Children who feel safe and know what to do
 - Behaviors emerge from safety and state of autonomic nervous system
- Introduction to the Three Brain Pathways (25 min)
 - Connection Mode: Owl Brain (Ventral Vagal)
 - Protection Mode: Watchdog Brain (Sympathetic - Fight/Flight)
 - Protection Mode: Possum Brain (Dorsal Vagal - Freeze/Collapse)
- Neuroception: The Brain's Safety Detection System (20 min)
 - Continuously scanning inside, outside, and between
 - 4x per second minimum
 - Felt safety as subjective experience
 - NOW + PAST = Subjective Reality (80% memory-based)
- Experiential Activity: Identifying the three pathways in ourselves (20 min)
- Q&A (10 min)

12:00 PM - 1:00 PM | LUNCH BREAK (1 hour)

1:00 PM - 2:30 PM | Session 3: Regulation, Co-Regulation & State-Dependent Functioning (1.5 hours)

Learning Objectives Addressed:

- LO #2: Describe challenging behaviors through the lens of the nervous system and relational neuroscience
- LO #4: Apply a brain-based treatment progression informed by Interpersonal Neurobiology and the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics

Content:

- Window of Tolerance and Regulation (15 min)
 - Sympathetic (accelerator) vs. Parasympathetic (brake)
 - The space where we can manage stress
- The Attachment Cycle and Co-Regulation (20 min)
 - Attachment as foundation for regulation
 - Three ingredients: Physical proximity, Attunement, Matching the energy
- State-Dependent Functioning (Bruce Perry) (30 min)
 - How brain function depends on state

- Four levels from SAFE → ALERT → ALARM → FEAR → TERROR
- Brain Development: Bottom-Up, Inside-Out (15 min)
- State-Dependent Thinking & Cognition (15 min)
- Partner Activity: Recognizing state changes in case examples (15 min)

2:30 PM - 2:45 PM | BREAK (15 minutes)

2:45 PM - 4:00 PM | Session 4: Deep Dive into Watchdog & Possum Pathways (1.25 hours)

Learning Objectives Addressed:

- LO #3: Teach a playful paradigm to help therapists, parents, and kids make sense of baffling behaviors
- LO #6: Conceptualize shame through the lens of the nervous system

Content:

- Watchdog Brain in Detail (25 min)
 - Four levels of the arousal continuum
 - Understanding behaviors at each level
- Possum Brain in Detail (25 min)
 - Four levels of the dissociation continuum
 - Recognizing dissociation in play therapy
- Nervous System Vulnerability (15 min)
 - Trauma, toxic stress, adoption, neurodivergence, sensory differences
 - Sensitized stress response: Mountain from a molehill
- Small group activity: Mapping behaviors to pathways (15 min)
- Day 1 wrap-up and preview of Day 2 (5 min)

4:00 PM | Day 1 Concludes

DAY 2 - Tuesday, June 2, 2026

9:00 AM - 10:30 AM | Session 5: Domains of Integration & Matching Brain State (1.5 hours)

Learning Objectives Addressed:

- LO #4: Apply a brain-based treatment progression informed by Interpersonal Neurobiology and the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics
- LO #5: Identify techniques to support state integration by connecting with inner parts of self

Content:

- Welcome back and Day 1 review (10 min)
- Domains of Integration (30 min)
 - Consciousness Integration: "Looking at" vs. "becoming" the experience
 - State Integration: Flexibility between parts, compassion and curiosity
 - Interpersonal Integration: Co-creating a "we"
- Play Therapy Interventions Matched to Brain State (35 min)
 - When Owl is Connected: Cortex/insight-oriented interventions
 - When Alert (Owl Still Connected): Increase structure, match energy
 - When in Protection Mode: Experiential play without the owl
- Video demonstration or role play: Matching intervention to brain state (15 min)

10:30 AM - 10:45 AM | BREAK (15 minutes)

10:45 AM - 12:00 PM | Session 6: The Neurosequential Approach & Co-Regulation Strategies (1.25 hours)

Learning Objectives Addressed:

- LO #4: Apply a brain-based treatment progression informed by Interpersonal Neurobiology and the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics
- LO #7: Apply nervous system theory to treatment planning

Content:

- Treatment Progression: Bottom-Up Development (20 min)
 - Organizing the brainstem through rhythmic, repetitive, relational, somatosensory experiences
 - Brainstem → Limbic → Cortex progression
- Increasing Self-Regulation Through Co-Regulation (20 min)
 - Safety as the only goal

- Presence, resonance, rhythm, sensation
- Supporting Development of Sense-of-Self (15 min)
- Working with Low Levels of Dysregulation (15 min)
- Case consultation in small groups: Treatment planning exercise (15 min)

12:00 PM - 1:00 PM | LUNCH BREAK (1 hour)

1:00 PM - 2:30 PM | Session 7: Metaphor, Storytelling & Teaching About the Brain (1.5 hours)

Learning Objectives Addressed:

- LO #3: Teach a playful paradigm to help therapists, parents, and kids make sense of baffling behaviors
- LO #5: Identify techniques to support state integration by connecting with inner parts of self
- LO #6: Conceptualize shame through the lens of the nervous system

Content:

- The Power of Play Therapy and Creative Arts (15 min)
- Therapist's Role in Supporting Integration (20 min)
 - Coherence: All behavior makes sense
 - Compassion & curiosity
 - Gratitude: No agenda
- Therapist Attunement Cycle (15 min)
- Understanding Owl, Watchdog, and Possum "Thoughts" (25 min)
 - How these internal narratives drive behavior and shame
- Benefits of Teaching Children About the Brain (15 min)
 - Decreases shame, increases self-compassion and feelings of control
- Experiential Activity: Creating a simple OWP story (20 min)

2:30 PM - 2:45 PM | BREAK (15 minutes)

2:45 PM - 4:00 PM | Session 8: Play-Based Interventions & Integration (1.25 hours)

Learning Objectives Addressed:

- LO #7: Apply nervous system theory to treatment planning
- LO #8: Demonstrate play-based interventions to reduce dysregulation and problematic behaviors

Content:

- Interventions for Different Levels of Dysregulation (20 min)
 - Lean INTO dysregulation - co-organize and co-regulate
 - Sensory play options, breathing, nourishing the body
 - Rhythmic, repetitive, relational, somatosensory: Bubbles, feathers, balloons, etc.
- Additional Therapeutic Supports (10 min)
- Experiential Practice Stations (30 min)
 - Station 1: Rhythmic/repetitive activities
 - Station 2: Sensory play materials
 - Station 3: Storytelling with OWP metaphor
 - Station 4: Matching energy practice
- Reflection: Four Key Questions (10 min)
- Final Q&A (10 min)
- Training conclusion and CE certificate information (5 min)

4:00 PM | Day 2 Concludes

Instructional Methods

The training employs a variety of evidence-based instructional methods to maximize learning and skill development:

- Instructor lecture and presentation
- Small group discussions
- Experiential activities and practice
- Role plays and demonstrations
- Case consultations
- Q&A sessions
- Reflection exercises

Materials Provided

- Complete handout packet (Parts 1-5)
- OWL, Watchdog, and Possum visual aids
- Resource list and bibliography
- Coffee, tea, light breakfast, and nourishing snacks throughout both days

Learning Objectives Summary

By the end of this 11-hour training, participants will be able to:

1. Explain how bringing coherence to symptoms can reduce burnout
2. Describe challenging behaviors through the lens of the nervous system and relational neuroscience
3. Teach a playful paradigm to help therapists, parents, and kids make sense of baffling behaviors
4. Apply a brain-based treatment progression informed by Interpersonal Neurobiology and the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics
5. Identify techniques to support state integration by connecting with inner parts of self
6. Conceptualize shame through the lens of the nervous system
7. Apply nervous system theory to treatment planning
8. Demonstrate play-based interventions to reduce dysregulation and problematic behaviors

Note: This agenda is subject to minor adjustments based on participant needs and group dynamics. All timing allocations are approximate and may flex to ensure optimal learning experiences.