

2026 Combined Pain Care Skills & Substance Use Disorder Training Agenda

What Happens in Vagus Stays in Vagus: The Role of the Vagus Nerve in Immunity Regulation, Inflammation, Pain & Trauma

Presented by: Kathleen McChesney, MA, PsyD

Offered: 19 August 2026; 0730-1130 AM ET

Location: National Union Building, Washington, DC

Description: This workshop will educate attendees on Polyvagal Theory, its neuroscientific contributions, and limitations. Clinical and therapeutic applications in the treatment of trauma, chronic illness, and inflammatory processes will be introduced for skill acquisition and clinical application.

Learning Objectives: Upon completion of this workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Understand autonomic neurophysiology
2. Explain Core Principles of Polyvagal Theory
3. Critically evaluate evidence limitations and controversies
4. Apply autonomic regulation strategies to:
 - a. Trauma
 - b. Chronic pain
 - c. Inflammatory and immunity conditions
5. Teach patients concrete regulation skills

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0730-0800 Autonomic Neurophysiology Basics

0800-0820 Core Principles of Polyvagal Theory

0820-0915 Consensus and Controversy: strengths, limitations and critiques

0915-0930 - Break -

0930-1030 Putting Theory into Practice: Strategies for Patients with

- Trauma (including polytrauma – not just psychogenic!)
- Pain
- Inflammatory and Immunity conditions

1030-1130 Integration and Ethics: Teaching Patients Concrete regulation skills