

Sample Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy Syllabus With Embedded Deliberate Practice Exercises

APPENDIX



This appendix provides a sample one-semester, three-unit course dedicated to teaching the application component of psychedelic-assisted therapy (PAT).

This course aims to orient learners to the field of psychedelic medicine and provide participants with an introduction to the theoretical foundations and practical applications of PAT. Drawing from current research and clinical experiences, the course will explore the integration of various therapeutic modalities and psychedelic substances to optimize treatment outcomes. Participants will engage in a combination of lectures, experiential exercises, case studies, and group discussions to bridge the gap between theory and practice in this emerging field.

In addition to this course, students should also complete foundational coursework informed by theory, research, and cultural considerations. Foundational coursework includes the landscape of relevant psychedelic and entheogenic approaches, a comprehensive review of therapeutic models and theoretical frameworks that pertain to PAT, the historical landscape that PAT is emerging from, regulatory requirements, cultural considerations in depth, review of the various international approaches to PAT, harm reduction approaches, ethical standards, and emerging best practices in PAT. When a strong theoretical base is achieved, students will be ready to begin applying theory to practice.

This course is appropriate for graduate students (master's and doctoral) at all levels of training. We present it as a model that can be adapted to a specific program's contexts and needs. For example, instructors may borrow portions of it to use in other courses, practica, didactic training events at externships and internships, workshops, and continuing education for postgraduate therapists. It is important to note that to become an expert in PAT takes many years of practice, self-assessment, peer assessment, and formal mentorship. It is essential for trainees to understand that completing a training program and acquiring basic PAT skills does not equate to practice competency or readiness. Instead, these activities provide an introduction to the field, an opportunity to assess one's skill level, a foundation in core safety aspects, and a path for ongoing skill development to gain proficiency over time. To set realistic expectations and support trainees in continuous learning and skill development, we strongly recommend the development of a comprehensive plan for continuous education and mentorship as an integral component of their PAT training program. In most Indigenous cultures, individuals aspiring to facilitate psychedelic medicine-assisted healing undergo extensive, years-long mentorship to attain competency.

Course Title: Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy

Course Description

Psychedelic substances, with their long-standing history in healing traditions, are now gaining recognition for their potential therapeutic benefits in treating various mental illnesses and substance use disorders and in enhancing emotional well-being. This course provides an introductory overview to the field of PAT.

Course Objectives

Students who complete this course will be able to

1. articulate how PAT theory and research apply to the practice of PAT.
2. apply the principles of deliberate practice to PAT skill exercises.
3. translate and address critical issues in PAT.
4. articulate how empirically supported psychotherapeutic treatment approaches interweave in the practice of PAT.
5. apply knowledge of key ethical issues and concerns surrounding PAT and practice enacting appropriate mitigation strategies.
6. describe and begin to practice developing competencies in processes related to preparation for and integration of PAT.
7. develop a peer feedback practice, continuing education plan, and mentorship pathway to support one's continued development of PAT competencies.

Although students will have a chance to practice core skills, they will not be ready to work with real clients upon completion of this course. Rather, this course serves as a basic orientation to PAT practice. To navigate the many complexities in PAT safely, students will need further knowledge and supervised practice in the following areas:

- Practitioner's capacity to provide safe care relates to their capacity for secure attachment, awareness of transference, projections, self-regulation, relational attunement, empathy, and access to one's intuitive capacities
- Pharmacological and pharmacokinetics of each psychedelic medicine
- Group-based models versus individual applications: considerations, risks, and benefits of each
- Pathways to enhance cultural awareness, humility, and inclusivity—holding paradox and complexity—awareness of traditional healing practices, honoring ceremonial aspects, and remaining tethered to research-informed practice/biomedical aspects
- Preventing and navigating power abuse and transgression
- Making decisions in regulatory gray areas in the delivery of PAT
- The role and application of music in the delivery of PAT
- PAT team development—promoting safety by ensuring a client's needs are holistically addressed by an interdisciplinary team
- Working within one's scope of practice in the delivery of PAT
- Ensuring continuity of care in the before, during, and after PAT: receiving referrals, intake, eligibility, suitability, charting aspects, consultation with wider care team, and post-PAT referrals

Date	Lecture and Discussion	Skills Lab	Homework (for next class)
Week 1	<p>Review of psychedelic-assisted therapy (PAT) history and research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historical context Psychedelic research Therapeutic approaches for PAT in general <p>Orientation to course process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applying and integrating deliberate practice scenarios Case studies Small group discussions 	<p>The history and principles of PAT theory, deliberate practice, and the first way of research; deliberate practice research</p> <p>Review deliberate practice preparation material (Chapters 1–3)</p>	<p>Required Costandi (2014); Luoma et al. (2020); Naranjo (1973/2013); Rush et al. (2022); Strauss et al. (2021)</p> <p>Supplemental Dubus (2020); Nutt et al. (2013); Passie (2018)</p>
Week 2	<p>Mechanisms of PAT medicines and the application of somatic approaches and attachment theory:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refresher of mechanisms and neurobiological aspects of PAT The role of attachment and attunement Therapeutic alliance Brief overview of the principles of transpersonal and somatic therapy approaches 	<p>Exercise 1: Redirecting to the Body</p>	<p>Required Banks et al. (2021); Constantino et al. (2010); de Vos et al. (2021); Kuhfuß et al. (2021); Swift & Greenberg (2015); Vollenweider & Komter (2010)</p> <p>Supplemental López-Giménez & González-Maeso (2017); Lu et al. (2021); Mendes et al. (2022); Rønberg (2019)</p>
Week 3	<p>Developing a PAT working alliance; establishing treatment goals; inner healing intelligence principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose and practice of compassionate witnessing in the process of “holding space” Team compositions that satisfy regulatory requirements 	<p>Case study: practice establishing treatment goals</p> <p>Exercise 2: Compassionately Witnessing Strong Emotions</p>	<p>Required Kirst (2022); Murphy et al. (2022); Safran & Muran (2000); Talia et al. (2020); Vaid & Walker (2022); Weingarten (2003)</p> <p>Supplemental Haijen et al. (2018); Halstead et al. (2021)</p>
Week 4	<p>Case study debrief from previous week</p> <p>Ethical and therapeutic foundations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a code of ethics for the class Establishing boundaries and providing informed and ongoing consent Intentions and expectations Boundaries 	<p>Small group: case study</p> <p>Exercise 3: Exploring Intentions and Expectations</p> <p>Contribute to a cocreated code of ethics</p>	<p>Required Carlin & Scheld (2019); Celidwen et al. (2023); Danforth (2009); Neitzke-Spruill (2020); Rochester et al. (2022); Ryan & Bennett (2020)</p> <p>Supplemental Brennan et al. (2021); McLane et al. (2021); Uthaug et al. (2021)</p>
Week 5	<p>Case study debrief from previous week</p> <p>Cultural considerations and diversity in psychedelic therapy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizing and addressing cultural biases and disparities Adapting therapeutic approaches to diverse populations Incorporating inclusivity and equity in psychedelic therapy practice Overview of the role of one's awareness of culture and past lineage: application to one's perspective, biases, and application to PAT Working with emotions 	<p>Small group: case study</p> <p>Exercise 4: Cultural Considerations: Racially and Ethnically Diverse Communities</p>	<p>Required Ching (2020); Fogg et al. (2021); Michaels et al. (2018); Rea & Wallace (2021); M. L. Williams et al. (2021); M. T. Williams et al. (2020)</p> <p>Supplemental Eriacho (2020); Hays (2009); Hook et al. (2017); D. T. Smith et al. (2022)</p>
Week 6	<p>Case study debrief from previous week</p> <p>Brief overview of PAT medicines: access, mechanisms, cultural considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ketamine MDMA Psilocybin LSD Ayahuasca Peyote In the context of legal options, what medicines are appropriate for what persons? Components of suitability assessments Components of informed and ongoing consent The role of agreements and boundaries related to PAT 	<p>Small group: case study</p> <p>Exercise 5: Boundaries and Informed Consent</p>	<p>Required Dames et al. (2022); Diamant et al. (2021); Dore et al. (2019); Dyck (2016); Little (2020); Roseman et al. (2018); Slosower et al. (2020); Wießner et al. (2023)</p> <p>Supplemental Argento et al. (2019); Wolfson (2019)</p>
Week 7	<p>Case study debrief from previous week</p> <p>Relational ruptures as an important integration pathway:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting acceptance and flexibility Overview of nonviolent communication, and application to PAT Leveraging ruptures 	<p>Small group: case study</p> <p>Exercise 6: Responding to Relational Ruptures</p>	<p>Required Eubanks et al. (2018); Walser et al. (2019); Watts & Luoma (2020); Wolff et al. (2020)</p>

Date	Lecture and Discussion	Skills Lab	Homework (for next class)
Week 8	Case study debrief from previous week Interweaving somatic approaches with multiplicity of parts theory, and understanding context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems theory • Validating conflicting parts of self 	Small group: case study Exercise 7: Working With the Client's Internal Conflict	Required Carhart-Harris et al. (2018); Goodwin et al. (2018); Rousseau (2015); Whitfield (2021) Supplemental Redfern (2023)
Week 9	Supervised practice via mock sessions	Record and (self- and peer-) evaluate mock sessions Midterm knowledge consolidation assignment due Midterm knowledge mobilization assignment due	
Week 10	Case study debrief from previous week Overview of transference and countertransference and the role of ritual and ceremony in PAT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing self-awareness • Leveraging transference for therapeutic benefit 	Small group: case study Exercise 8: Addressing Transference	Required Goldpaugh (2022); Prasko et al. (2022); Suszek et al. (2015)
Week 11	Case study debrief from previous week Self- and other regulation and trauma-informed practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trauma-informed practice applications • Expanding the window of tolerance 	Small group: case study Exercise 9: Navigating Strong Emotions	Required Corrigan et al. (2011); Knight (2019); Teixeira et al. (2022) Supplemental J. Fisher (2019)
Week 12	Case study debrief from previous week Integration and aftercare: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of integration in maximizing therapeutic benefits • Techniques for supporting clients in integrating insights into daily life • Designing comprehensive aftercare plans and follow-up sessions • Overview of integration theory and practice principles • Promoting meaning making of PAT experiences 	Small group: case study Exercise 10: Making Sense of the Experience: Integration I	Required Amada & Shane (2022); Bathje et al. (2022); Frymann et al. (2022); Walsh & Thiessen (2018)
Week 13	Case study debrief from previous week Decision making amid uncertainty: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk reduction and harm reduction • Navigating gray areas (making decisions amid a lack of regulatory guidance) • Navigating disappointment, managing expectations, and exploring reflective patterns between what arises in PAT experiences and everyday life challenges 	Small group: case study Exercise 11: Working With Disappointment: Integration II	Required Gorman et al. (2021); Pilecki et al. (2021); Watts & Luoma (2020); M. L. Williams et al. (2021)
Week 14	Case study debrief from previous week Integration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding the capacity by expanding the liminal space • Emotional regulation within liminal spaces • Promoting security within liminal spaces • Normalizing expansion and contraction 	Small group: case study Exercise 12: Embodying Insights: Integration III	Required Grof (2008); Lutkajtis & Evans (2023) Supplemental A-Tjak et al. (2015)
Week 15	Case study debrief from previous week Review of ongoing learning planning Small group wrap-up	Final knowledge consolidation assignment due (demonstrating adequate knowledge acquisition) Final knowledge mobilization assignment due (demonstrating leadership in the field) Final deliberate practice exercises (via video or direct supervision), self- and peer assessments due (demonstrating understanding of core PAT skills) Sign a cocreated code of ethics	None

Format of Class

Classes are 3 hours long. Course time is split evenly among learning PAT theory, integrating the material in a small-group format, reviewing case studies, and acquiring PAT skills.

Lecture/Discussion Class: Each week, there will be one Lecture/Discussion class for 1.5 hours focusing on PAT theory and related research, followed by 1.5 hours in a small group or lab setting.

Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy Skills Lab: Each week, please plan to spend an additional 1.5 hours practicing skills on your own time. Skills labs are for practicing PAT skills using the exercises in this book. The exercises use therapy simulations (role-plays) with the following goals:

1. Build trainees' skill and confidence for using PAT skills with real clients.
2. Provide a safe space for experimenting with different therapeutic interventions, without fear of making mistakes.
3. Provide plenty of opportunity to explore and "try on" different styles of therapy, so trainees can ultimately discover their own personal, unique therapy style.

Mock Sessions: Twice in the semester (weeks 9 and 15), trainees will do a psychotherapy mock session in the PAT skills lab. In contrast to highly structured and repetitive deliberate practice exercises, a psychotherapy mock session is an unstructured and improvised role-played therapy session. Mock sessions let trainees:

1. Practice using PAT skills responsively.
2. Experiment with clinical decision making in an unscripted context.
3. Discover their personal therapeutic style.
4. Build endurance for working with real clients.

Homework

Homework will be assigned each week and will include reading, 1 hour of skills practice with an assigned practice partner, and occasional writing assignments. For the skills practice homework, trainees will repeat the exercise they did for that week's PAT skills lab. Because the instructor will not be there to evaluate performance, trainees should instead complete the Deliberate Practice Reaction Form, as well as the Deliberate Practice Diary Form, for themselves as a self-evaluation. Furthermore, it is important that students get in the practice of giving and receiving peer feedback, with the goal of developing a career-long habit of the same.

Assignments

Students are to complete a knowledge consolidation and translation assignment: one due at midterm and one due at the last day of class. In the spirit of cultural inclusivity and honoring a variety of ways of knowing and sharing knowledge, for the consolidation component, students have three options: They may submit an article suitable for publication, they can provide a recorded presentation, or they can compile a protocol and documentation package that will guide and document their practice. Some possible topics for the article or presentation forms of the assignment are as follows:

- Exploration of one aspect of PAT theory, research, or technique
- A partial transcript of one of the trainees' therapy cases with a real client, with discussion from a psychedelic-assisted therapy perspective

Multicultural Orientation

This course is taught in a multicultural context, defined as “how the cultural worldviews, values, and beliefs of the client and therapist interact and influence each another to co-create a relational experience that is in the spirit of healing” (Davis et al., 2018, p. 3). Core features of the multicultural orientation include cultural comfort, humility, and responding to cultural opportunities (or previously missed opportunities). Throughout this course, students are encouraged to reflect on their own cultural identity and improve their ability to attune with their clients’ cultural identities (Hook et al., 2017). For further guidance on this topic and deliberate practice exercises to improve multicultural skills, see the book *Deliberate Practice in Multicultural Therapy* (J. Harris et al., 2024).

Vulnerability, Privacy, and Boundaries

This course is aimed at developing PAT skills, self-awareness, and interpersonal skills in an experiential framework and as relevant to clinical work. This course is not psychotherapy or a substitute for psychotherapy. Students should interact at a level of self-disclosure that is personally comfortable and helpful to their own learning. Although becoming aware of internal emotional and psychological processes is necessary for a therapist’s development, it is not necessary to reveal all that information to the trainer. It is important for students to sense their own level of safety and privacy. Students are not evaluated on the level of material that they choose to reveal in the class.

In accordance with the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (American Psychological Association, 2017), students are **not required to disclose personal information**. Because this class is about developing both interpersonal and PAT competence, the following are some important points so that students are fully informed as they make choices to self-disclose:

- Students choose how much, when, and what to disclose. Students are not penalized for the choice not to share personal information.
- The learning environment is susceptible to group dynamics much like any other group space, and therefore students may be asked to share their observations and experiences of the class environment with the singular goal of fostering a more inclusive and productive learning environment.

Confidentiality

To create a safe learning environment that is respectful of client and therapist information and diversity and to foster open and vulnerable conversation in class, students are required to agree to strict confidentiality within and outside of the instruction setting.

Evaluation

Self-Evaluation: At the end of the semester (Week 15), trainees will perform a self-evaluation. This will help trainees track their progress and identify areas for further development. The “Guidance for Trainees” section in Chapter 3 of this book highlights potential areas of focus for self-evaluation.

Peer Evaluation: Between classes students will be paired up to practice with the deliberate practice exercises. Before you switch roles in the role-play, please provide feedback for your peer (who was acting in the role of a therapist)—for instance, speaking to body language, tone of voice, what felt effortful/challenging, what inspired you, and what might be said differently (quality improvement components).

Grading Criteria

As designed, students would be accountable for the level and quality of their performance in the following:

- facilitation and contribution to small group discussions,
- the skills lab (exercises and mock sessions),
- homework,
- midterm assignments (consolidating and translating knowledge), and
- a final exam (consolidating and translating knowledge).

Required Readings

- Amada, N., & Shane, J. (2022). Self-actualization and the integration of psychedelic experience: The mediating role of perceived benefits to narrative self-functioning. *The Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00221678221099680>
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