

Rewiring the Past, Restoring the Present:

An Introduction to the Role of Lifespan Integration in Treating Trauma and Dissociation

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CONNECT to NOW to SELF to OTHERS to LIFE



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Lifespan Integration: An Introduction

"Psychotherapy is not a modern invention, but a relationship-based learning environment grounded in the history of our social brains. Thus, the roots of psychotherapy go back to mother-child bonding, attachment to family and friends, and the guidance of wise elders." ~Louis Cozolino

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Today's Learnings

- A Brief History of Lifespan Integration
- Lifespan Integration Use and Application
- Theory and Current Research
- Clinician and Client Experiences
- I will not be teaching you how to start using LI



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What is Lifespan Integration?

Lifespan Integration is a modality primarily used to treat trauma and dissociation. It has most recently extended its usage to treat attachment rupture and nervous system dysregulation. It is a bottom up, right brained approach which works with memories in various ways to create new firing patterns and updated emotional and procedural learning.

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Lifespan Integration: A Brief History

Lifespan Integration evolved out of the intersection of several therapeutic modalities and theories that Peggy Pace studied and experienced in the 1980's-early 2000's. These influencing methods are:

- Jungian Archetypal Psychology
- Family Systems Therapy
- Rational Emotive Therapy
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Object relations
- Inner Child therapy
- EMDR
- Dream Interpretation to understand the unconscious mind
- Jungian Active Imagination
- Recognition of repetitive unconscious patterns (life 'themes').

Additional Theories as LI has evolved:

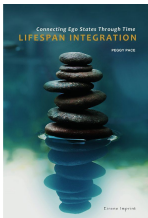
- Attachment Theory
- Memory Reconsolidation



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Lifespan Integration: A Brief History

- Peggy began experimenting with LI in trauma/EMDR sessions with clients that she found were "getting stuck" or "looping"
- As her theory grew more cohesive, she wrote manuals and began teaching
- As more and more clients began having significant experiences, it began to grow
- Lifespan Integration is now taught all over the world. Therapists in the US, Canada, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, France, Germany, Belgium, Austria, UK, and Russia have been trained.



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Lifespan Integration

Connecting with the now, with yourself, with others, and with life

Trauma Resolution. By helping individuals process their past in a safe, structured manner, Lifespan Integration works to heal emotional wounds and strengthen the ability to face present-day challenges. It's a trauma-informed therapy that does not re-traumatize, but instead focuses on integration and growth.

Emotional and ANS Regulation. Clients no longer reach outside of themselves to regulate, but can internally regulate in the face of the daily ups and downs of life.

Self Compassion. Clients internalize love and compassion for self which shifts patterns of shame, guilt and negative beliefs about self. Clients begin to become more spontaneously self compassionate which results in changes like better boundaries, healthier relationships, changes to employment etc.

Attachment Repair. Core attachment needs are met and integrated, moving clients toward earned secure attachment. Clients will be better able to "self parent" as they gain wisdom and truly become the age they are. This results in things like embodied dignity, a sense of humor returning, "less triggered", more agency/less helplessness

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Lifespan Integration Rationale

Clients become **INTEGRATED**

You will see your clients changing towards a more coherent and integrated way of being. Daniel Siegel (1999) defines integrated as **FACES**:

Flexible - Clients demonstrate less rigidity in coping skills, more complicated thought emerges (shades of grey), ability to take others perspectives

Adaptive - Clients can adapt to their current environment rather than responding from a younger ego state

Coherent - Clients integrate traumatic memories, becoming more present in their bodies, more mindful, and aware of their current agency

Energized - Clients experience changes to their arousal state resulting in less anxiety, less depression, joy in living

Stable - Clients experience a stabilization of chaos including less substance use, less aggression, less interpersonal strife

"Integration is not a function of the self. It is what the self is."

The FACES of an
Integrated Brain

Flexible
Adaptive
Coherent
Energized
Stable

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Lifespan Integration: 3 Pillars

The Timeline



An Attuned Therapist



Active Imagination

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Lifespan Integration: Pillar One

The primary tool used in LI to create integration and healing is

The Timeline

- DO NOT use timelines without training
- Lifespan Integration is not the first to discover timelines but we did discover their potency
- Timelines can cause nervous system dysregulation



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Lifespan Integration: Pillar One

The Timeline



The tool used in LI to create integration and healing is *The Timeline*

- In the beginning of therapy we create a timeline of life events, 1-3 memories for every year of the client's life. We include the traumas but also the mundane.
- We generally create the timeline with the client - a great way to learn about your clients and a wonderful assessment tool.
- We use the timeline in a variety of ways. LI has many different protocols, depending on the stage of therapy.
- In LI we are always doing one of two things with the timeline; we are "core building" or "processing trauma". We are "putting the good stuff in" or "taking the bad stuff out".

LI is the only trauma therapy I know that has protocols for early attachment repair AND trauma resolution.

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Lifespan Integration: Pillar One

The Timeline



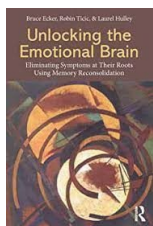
LI Proposes that working with repetitions of the timeline (safely, with a trained therapist) can:

- Place clients chronologically in time ("turning time back on")
- Integrate body memory of trauma
- Builds a more coherent and regulated self system

"Trauma survivors can have a distorted sense of time. They may know intellectually that time has passed, but often their bodies have held the trauma in isolated networks, causing fractions to present day triggers years after the trauma has occurred. LI proves the passage of time at the cellular level". Peggy Pace

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The Timeline and Memory Reconsolidation



- The theory of memory reconsolidation centers on the idea that memories and their associated emotions may be altered after they are retrieved from the subconscious mind. Once these memories surface, new emotional learning can be introduced in order to modify undesirable behavioral patterns (Ecker et al., 2012).
- Essentially, we can change the emotional valence, associated beliefs and actions of a memory, permanently. The steps of memory reconsolidation include reactivation, unlocking, juxtaposition and verification. Each repetition of the timeline helps the brain reconsolidate its memories.
- For further reading: Unlocking the Emotional Brain by Ecker, Ticic and Hulley, 2012. And Trauma and Memory by Peter Levine, 1997.

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Lifespan Integration: Pillar Two

An Attuned Therapist



The second pillar of LI is the **attuned therapist**.

- LI cannot be done alone. Simply hearing one's own timeline is not sufficient for creating change. A present and attuned therapist is required to experience memory reconsolidation, a safe other, and a shift in perspective.
- In order to be certified, we require our clinicians to receive LI personally, as a client. A very important part of LI is that an LI clinician has done their own work.
- A LI clinician holds a steady presence, pays attention to the client's nervous system changes throughout session and is charting the trajectory of growth.

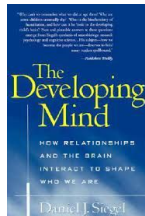
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Attuned Therapist: Rationale

Siegel defines the factors that help create integration as:

- The **co-creation** of a global map of self across space and time.
- The **co-construction** of the autobiographical narrative.
- Linking memory cues across space and time **within an emotionally supportive *attuned* interpersonal relationship.**

Siegel, D. J. (2020). The developing mind: How relationships and the brain interact to shape who we are (3rd ed.).



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Schore (2022), in summarizing 30 years of research, reports:

"only a right and not left brain therapeutic approach can change the patient's unconscious self image and unconscious internal working model of attachment". And "the psychotherapist's relational and emotional expertise in working in psychotherapeutic relationships with a wide variety of patients, more than a mastery of techniques, lies at the core of the art of psychotherapy"

Schore, A. Right brain-to-right brain psychotherapy: recent scientific and clinical advances. *Ann Gen Psychiatry* 21, 46 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12991-022-00420-3>

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Lifespan Integration: Pillar Three

Active Imagination

- In many protocols in LI we use "active imagination" with different ego states (ages) to facilitate the integration of traumatic memories.
- We focus on identifying specific fragmented memories, often associated with intense emotions like fear, shame, humiliation, anger, or helplessness. Our goal is to help process and integrate these memories, which can lead to a lasting shift in their emotional impact.
- We use the "adult self" to help the "younger self" to:
 - a) complete trauma actions
 - b) turn time back on
 - c) shift perspective
 - d) move from terror/shame/rage to self compassion/dignity/righteous anger



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Active Imagination: Rationale

Favorite studies:

St. Jacques PL, Spornar KK, Schacter DL. (2017). [Shifting visual perspective during retrieval shapes autobiographical memories](#). *NeuroImage*, 148, 103-114.

Dr. St. Jacques's research helps us understand that when we shift perspectives within a memory (for instance, viewing a memory from your adult self perspective versus "from your own eyes"), you recruit totally different neural circuits and in fact increase integration and coherence. The results appear to be long lasting.



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Active Imagination: Rationale

"Trauma is not what happened to us, but what we hold inside in the absence of compassionate witness" Peter Levine

Through active imagination using the "adult self" we can complete trauma reactions, provide the validation, empathy and support that was not present at the time of the event, and assist the younger ego state to understand this event is over. For further reading:

The Body Keeps The Score by Bessel Van der Kolk

Waking the Tiger by Peter Levine



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Impact of Lifespan Integration

- Decrease anxiety and depressive symptoms
- Improves emotional and ANS regulation
- Reduces symptoms of PTSD
- Heals the mind and body from trauma
- Helps to establish a core sense of self love and compassion
- Potential to develop earned secure attachment



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Difference Between LI and Talk Therapy

- Talk therapies are ineffective when implicit memory is disconnected from explicit memory (i.e., a fragmented ego state exists)
- Talk therapies help clients gain insight into behavior, but they are unable to change behaviors coming from a fragmented ego state residing in implicit memory with unmet needs.
- LI activates the fragmented ego state, meets its needs, and integrates it with repetitions of timeline.
- Thus, LI successfully eliminates "triggers" causing unwanted thoughts/behaviors in the present.

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Lifespan Integration Inclusion

Lifespan Integration (LI) as a modality offers clients trauma resolution and repairs attachment deficits. As LI therapists engaging in this important work, we maintain deep respect for the lived experience of each client. LI has always honored the diversity of each client, thus facilitating clinical interactions that are inclusive and anti-oppressive, through the following components:

- LI as a modality is open and inclusive of both therapists and clients regardless of culture, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, religion, neurodiversity, disability status, nationality, or any other aspect which makes them unique.
- The main "material" used in all LI protocols is the Timeline which is a list of memory cues unique to each client.
- LI is naturally "client centered" due to the strong emphasis on attunement. LI honors each client's own emerging Wisdom without pressure to become or let go of anything the client is not ready or willing to do.

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Lifespan Integration Inclusion

- LI is a bottom up modality. The client's system is the agent of change
- LI honors client autonomy, which means that the client chooses how much they share. A skilled LI therapist does not ask for more than what is needed.
- LI requires all certified LI therapists to do their own LI therapy which minimizes biases that therapists may be unaware of and increases the capacity to be vulnerable which is conducive to having competence in all areas of diversity. A therapist who has a growing competence in all areas of diversity is willing to constantly learn about each client, and able to admit mistakes and seek to repair them.

Lastly, LI trainings are only available for Master Level Counselors who by definition should have ongoing training on the meaning and practice of competence in diversity, equity and inclusion.

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Lifespan Integration Safety Parameters

Always essential to first assess...

- Suicidality
- Substance Abuse
- Untreated medical issues
- Psychosis
- Safety concerns

Use of coordinated care.
Sometimes referral is necessary for higher level of care before beginning LI

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Research

LI is currently considered evidence based, although more RCT's are needed.

A summation of research can be found on the LI US and LI Institute website but some examples include:

- Client Experience of One-Session Treatment with Modified Lifespan Integration (MI) after Sexual Trauma. Author: Muriel Dandoy
- Effects of Lifespan Integration Therapy on Anxiety and Emotional Management: Initial evidence from a pragmatic case study. Authors: Ana Bajramovic Richet, Audrey Branly, and Nathalie Duriez.
- Lifespan Integration as a treatment method for PTSD. A naturalistic outcome study at a specialist clinic in Stockholm for patients who have been subjected to sexual assault. Authors: Joakim Brådenmark and Maria Järnare
- Lifespan Integration Efficacy research study. Author: Monica Hu
- Lifespan Integration for treatment of rape victims. Author: WONSA



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Lifespan Integration Levels of Treatment and Protocols

Level 1: Baseline, Timeline from Explicit Memory, PTSD, Relationship Protocol

Level 2: Baseline Plus, Standard

Level 3: Attunement, Birth Protocol, Baseline Plus

Level 4: Preverbal Attachment Repair, Cell-Being, Deepening Baseline Plus

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10 Potential Benefits for Clinicians

1. Burnout decreases.
2. Vicarious trauma and countertransference are reduced.
3. Time management and structure for client sessions are increased.
4. Clinical bias is prevented.
5. Healing is promoted, enabling clients to conclude counseling.
6. A standard structure applicable to various client types and disorders is provided. Personalization is further allowed due to the attunement aspect, making it standardized yet individualized.
7. Science and therapeutic artistry are combined.
8. Participation in LI Community.
9. LI is evidenced-based, so it can be used with insurance.
10. Clients can be quickly onboarded to the treatment plan, which may result in higher client retention in some cases.

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Clinician Experience

"Lifespan Integration has become my primary modality because I have seen the benefits both personally and in the lives of my clients. I appreciate the adaptability and variability LI offers. It gives me confidence to know I will be able to meet my clients, whatever their issue or need, with truly competent care. I am grateful for the protocols and tools LI offers to help me spend my time supporting clients in finding the deepest possible healing. I've had the privilege of bearing witness to seismic positive shifts in the lives of my clients and LI provided the roadmap to transformation." - D.H.

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Clinician Experience

"The best part about using Lifespan Integration is witnessing clients reunite with their authentic selves and deeply heal from the past. As a clinician, I find using LI helps prevent burnout and vicarious trauma while also limiting clinician's bias."

- K.M.

"I have seen so many powerful things happen in my sessions with clients both during and afterwards, even those clients who have been through horrific events. Hearing my clients testify how they see themselves and their lives in a new and positive light encourages me to keep going." - K.M.A.

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Level 1 in Birmingham, AL

Instructor: Stephanie Davis, LPC

Date: August 23rd & 24th, 2025 OR
October 3rd & 4th, 2025

Times: 9:00am-5:30pm both days

Continuing Education: 14.5 Clock hours through NBCC

Venue: 1908 14th Ave. S. Birmingham, AL 35205
Historic Oasis Counseling Center for Women and Children

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Client Experience

"LI transformed the way I perceive my life, myself and others. It has profoundly impacted my whole being, allowing for deep healing in my mind, body and soul. LI provided me access and clarity about my true self and supported my journey in living an authentic life where I feel my feelings, speak my truths and care for myself in meaningful ways." - K.M.D.

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Client Experience

"There isn't enough time or even the right words to describe the impact of LI on my life. I say "no" to people now. I can laugh at and give myself grace for my mistakes. I actually experience my full range of emotions now which also means that I am unpleasant to be around sometimes but I don't panic about people leaving me over it. I have more energy now at 37 than I did in my teens and 20's because I don't have my depression and anxiety dragging me down anymore.

I think most importantly though is the self love I have found through LI. I now know and believe that I am delightful because of LI and I am forever grateful to the modality and the clinicians who worked with me for that."
- N.G.

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Questions?

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Please do not attempt without training!



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