



## Real Life Heroes® (RLH) Training Programs

### *RLH Fundamentals*

*RLH Fundamentals* provides therapists with easily accessible tools that combine creative arts, yoga, movement, and storytelling with the imagery of the ‘hero’s journey’ in a flexible format that can be easily adapted for diverse youths and families. Tools and activities link youths and parents/caregivers to strengths in their families and cultural heritage, promote development of affect modulation skills, strengthen (or build) emotionally supportive relationships, and promote trauma memory re-integration.

*RLH Fundamentals* includes a trauma and resiliency-focused toolkit, demonstrations, guided practice, on-demand training modules, live consultation groups, and supervisory and director-level consultations. These are ‘how-to’ training programs that enable therapists and program leaders to implement evidence-supported treatment for complex trauma and Developmental Trauma Disorder with youths and families who have experienced abuse, neglect, family violence, historical traumas, losses, illness, or placements into foster families, juvenile justice, refugee, residential, hospital or school-based programs.

RLH training programs are adapted for each organization to match priorities, available time, previous training, and organizational objectives. Participants typically receive copies of RLH books and tools and have opportunities in each training session to practice development and implementation of the *RLH* multi-dimensional assessment and service plan, session structure, and the *Real Life Heroes Life Storybook, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.*, for use with youths and families. Consultation groups and video-streamed workshops include development of strategies for managing challenges frequently encountered in trauma therapy as well as adaptations to engage diverse youths and families and implementation in a wide range of programs.

### Goals

- **Effective Therapy:** Clinicians utilize *Real Life Heroes* assessment and therapy tools to assure implementation of NCTSN core components recommended for assessment and treatment of Complex Trauma/Developmental Trauma Disorder.
- **Flexible, Cost-effective Training:** Training in use of *Real Life Heroes* fits with time and financial constraints.

- **Increased Engagement & Inclusion:** Training in use of *Real Life Heroes* leads to:
  - Increased levels of initial and sustained engagement in therapy for Complex Trauma/Developmental Trauma Disorder compared to years before training
  - Expansion of services to youths and families who have experienced chronic traumas and were not previously engaged in sustained evidence-supported complex trauma therapy.
- **Clinician Endorsement:** Clinicians indicate confidence in a feedback survey to implement core components of *Real Life Heroes* adapted for diverse youths and families after completion of *RLH Fundamentals* training.
- **Sustainability:** Training in use of *Real Life Heroes* tools continues over a five-year period leading to continued implementation by clinicians.

**Looking for practical tools for expanding engagement and inclusion, a cost-effective means for infusing and sustaining evidence-supported complex trauma therapy in hard-pressed treatment centers, or a crash course in resiliency-focused therapy that brings out strengths in youths and families struggling with chronic trauma?**

## ***RLH ON DEMAND***

*RLH On Demand* was developed for treatment centers experiencing high turn-over and challenges freeing therapists for scheduled training programs. This program includes the ***RLH Fundamentals*** curriculum *and* is available for beginning and advanced practitioners at times that best match their schedules through-out the year on a laptop or mobile device. *RLH* allows therapists to focus their time on learning how to use the RLH framework and tools that will be most helpful for their work. This practice-focused training program that helps therapists build on previous training in trauma treatment and implementation from the first training module.

*RLH On Demand* draws from implementation and adult learning research and builds sequentially beginning with a theoretical and research foundation for attachment and resiliency-focused complex trauma therapy followed by initial messages to youths and parents/caregivers, assessments, collaborative service planning, fidelity checks and chapter-by-chapter implementation of the *RLH Life Storybook*. The curriculum is matched to NCTSN's recommended 'best practices' for child welfare and phase-based complex trauma treatment and can be used to supplement other evidence-supported trauma treatment models, e.g., ITCT, ARC, SPARCS, TST, TF-CBT.

Each *RLH On-Demand* training module includes video and slide presentations, brief quizzes, therapist reflections and practice designed to help therapists become comfortable implementing tools and activities so they can adapting material to increase and sustain engagement. Reflections are designed to promote therapist growth, use of self in therapy and prevention of secondary PTSD. Modules are accompanied by PowerPoint handouts downloadable tools and worksheets that guide implementation. *RLH On-Demand* can be used by professionals working alone or in

teams. RLH On- Demand is optimally supplemented by small clinical consultation groups as well as supervisor/director consultation to promote application in a wide range of programs and with diverse children, adolescents, and families.

Video-streamed (live) train-the-trainer programs are also available for directors, supervisors, or consultants to prepare for leading training programs as ‘in-house trainers’ with their own staff using RLH On Demand and other RLH resources. In-house trainers can utilize RLH materials in workshops or on-going meetings to promote team development and collaboration.

**RLH On-Demand is now available at:**

<https://reallifeheroes.thinkific.com/courses/real-life-heroes-fundamentals-resiliency-focused-therapy-for-complex-traumas>

**Applications for a limited number of grant-funded registrations for *RLH Fundamentals; Resiliency-focused Therapy for Children and Families with Complex Trauma* for program teams may be available for 2025-26. Please see details on p. 13.**

## Learning Objectives

After completion of *RLH Fundamentals*, therapists will demonstrate increased understanding and abilities to:

- ◆ Identify different types of chronic complex traumatic stress and describe the impact of chronic traumatic stress on youths, families and communities
- ◆ Describe and utilize diagnostic indicators for Complex PTSD and Developmental Trauma Disorder.
- ◆ Describe and implement NCTSN-recommended components for treatment of Complex Trauma and Developmental Trauma Disorder.
- ◆ Access and implement an evidence-supported, resiliency-focused treatment program for complex traumatic stress with adaptations for diverse families and a wide range of behavioral health, child and family service, school-based, justice-involved and refugee programs.
- ◆ Assess a range of basic feelings, safety, levels of self and co-regulation, and emotional support for youths and parents/caregivers within primary relationships as well as the impact on youths and parents/caregivers of historical traumas, prejudice, racism and community violence, chronicity of traumas and resiliency factors.
- ◆ Develop assessment-driven treatment plans and treatment strategies matched to a youth’s emotional and cognitive development, level of self- and co-regulation, predictability and preventability of any recurrent traumas and level of security and emotional support of primary youth-parent/caregiver relationships.
- ◆ Promote & sustain engagement with children, adolescents, parents and caregivers in resiliency-focused therapy for Complex Trauma/DTD and collaborative treatment planning.

- ◆ Promote & sustain engagement with parents & caregivers in resiliency-centered therapy for Complex Trauma/DTD.
- ◆ Strengthen youth and parent/caregiver attunement and trust.
- ◆ Utilize strategies to increase skills for self and co-regulation of feelings.
- ◆ Promote safety for youths, families and communities.
- ◆ Promote coping skills to manage stressful events.
- ◆ Reduce traumatic stress reactions to reminders of past traumas and on-going or predictable stressors.
- ◆ Help youths and parents/caregivers overcome feelings of shame and develop a positive self-image for each family member connected to their cultural heritage
- ◆ Engage and empower parents/caregivers to understand the impact of traumas on their children and their own lives, to learn how to prevent or reduce trauma reactions and to become the heroes youths need to restore safety and rebuild (or build) emotionally supportive relationships.
- ◆ Utilize life story work to help youths and their parents/caregivers to develop stronger identities linked to their families and cultural heritage including lessons learned from living through past and ongoing adversity e.g., discrimination, racism, community violence as well as relational traumas.

Organizational objectives include:

- ◆ High rates of therapist implementation of RLH core components, Life Storybook chapters and Toolkit resources, e.g. *Circles of Caring, My Thermometers, SOS for Stress, Moving Through Tough Times*, with 2-4 youths and families beginning the first weeks after the initial workshop and optimally 10 youths and families in the first year after the workshop.
- ◆ Sustained implementation of RLH core components and NCTSN ‘best practice’ recommendations by therapists after completion of training programs with all youths and families who have complex trauma/DTD.
- ◆ Sustained implementation of chapters from the RLH *Life Storybook* and RLH *Toolkit* resources, e.g. *Circles of Caring, My Thermometers, SOS for Stress, Youth and Parent/Caregiver Power Plans, Moving Through Tough Times*, after completion of training with youths and families who have complex trauma/DTD.
- ◆ Continuation of learning communities initiated or involved in RLH training including exploration of trauma and resiliency-focused treatment strategies, adaptations for youths and families served and prevention of Secondary PTSD for therapists and caregivers.

## ***RLH Fundamentals Curriculum***

RLH Fundamentals Training Program modules cover:

- I. *Resiliency-Focused Therapy for Complex Trauma and Developmental Trauma Disorder*
  - ◆ The impact and experience of chronic complex trauma/DTD
  - ◆ The challenge of engagement, retention & inclusion
  - ◆ Recommended ‘best practice’ treatment components

- ◆ Using *RLH* core components, *Life Storybook* chapters and fidelity guides to address ‘best practice’ components
- ◆ Creating opportunities for parents/caregivers and youths to practice attunement and build or strengthen trust with drawing, rhythm, music, yoga and story-telling using the *RLH* Session Structure, *RLH Toolkit* Chapter by Chapter guides, Chapter Checkpoints, Pitfalls, Adaptations, Troubleshooting, assessment and chapter by chapter activity worksheets
- ◆ Clinic-based youth & parent illustrations
- ◆ Practice implications from *RLH* research
- ◆ Feedback from youths and parents/caregivers about *RLH*

## II. *Starting the Journey: Expanding Engagement and Inclusion with Resiliency-focused Assessments and Collaborative Service Planning*

- ◆ Building on ‘the hero’s journey’ to restore hope and Transforming therapy into a journey
- ◆ Opening messages to create realistic hope and demonstrate respect for youths and parents/caregivers coping with adversity
- ◆ Looking for strengths and resources in the youth, family, their cultural heritage and community
- ◆ Avoiding shame-inducing messages and diagnostic terms
- ◆ Using the *Circles of Caring* and *My Thermometers* to assess youths and parents/caregivers’ relationships, emotional functioning and regulation within relationships
- ◆ Assessing attachments, arousal, and developmental levels
- ◆ Utilizing transference and countertransference as clues to unlock stuck relationships
- ◆ Multi-dimensional assessment of chronic complex trauma
- ◆ Youths as wounded angels guiding us to unresolved pain
- ◆ Prioritizing trauma & resiliency-focused treatment to increase engagement
- ◆ Utilizing *RLH* core components in assessments and service planning,
- ◆ RTC illustration; 17-year old youth and her family
- ◆ *RLH* Assessment & Service Plan for a youth and family identified by practitioner
- ◆ Optional: assessment illustration with a 14-year old

## III. *Developing Emotionally Supportive Relationships, Self- and Co-Regulation Skills to Manage Stressors: RLH Phase I Implementation (RLH Life Storybook Chapters 1-8)*

### Chapters 1-2

- ◆ Introducing the *Life Storybook* and session structure to youths and parents/caregivers
- ◆ Restoring hope and curiosity with a little magic
- ◆ Engaging and enhancing youth-parent/caregiver attunement and empathy with rhythm, music, yoga and movement activities
- ◆ Trauma and resiliency psychoeducation to empower youths and parents/caregivers: introduction to neural development, understanding traumatic stress reactions and how developing affect modulation skills, strengthening emotionally supportive relationships and changing interactive behavior patterns can help
- ◆ Changing trauma triggers into opportunities for emotional development with Four-Step Parent/Caregiver Responses to reduce or prevent traumatic stress reactions
- ◆ Learning and practicing *SOS for Stress* and using the *Safety First Card*
- ◆ Building capacity for recognizing and expressing emotions
- ◆ Utilizing three-chapter storytelling with feelings

### Chapters 3-4

- ◆ Identifying heroes to inspire skill-building and relationships
- ◆ Understanding how heroes work together, seek help and help others
- ◆ Developing youth and parent/caregiver *Power Plans* to change trauma reaction patterns
- ◆ 17-year old RTC youth Power Plan & Action Cycles
- ◆ Using *The Hero's Challenge* to promote skill-building and developing relationships

Chapters 5-6

- ◆ Identifying and strengthening primary family relationships over time
- ◆ Important people and resources; finding and building relationships with mentors, friends, educators, clergy, coaches and other skill-builders
- ◆ Using 'improv' to promote sharing and build or strengthen youth-parent/caregiver relationships
- ◆ Day treatment 12-year old building interactive support case example

Chapter 7

- ◆ Strengthening self and co-regulation with Mind Power (mindfulness skill-building)
- ◆ Creating Safe place/Safe relationship drawings and multi-modal stories including attachment-centered Resiliency Shields

Chapter 8

- ◆ Changing the Story (CBT moviemaking exercise for traumatic stress reactions)
- ◆ Day Treatment 14-year old Example of Abbreviated Case; Changing the Cycle

IV. *Moving Through Tough Times, Building a Stronger Identity: RLH Phase II, Life Story Integration (RLH Life Storybook Chapters 9-12)*

Chapter 9

- ◆ Creating a Life Roadmap
- ◆ Organizing a Chronological Life Story including transitions and *Timeline*
- ◆ Understanding how trauma experience integration works

Chapter 10

- ◆ Applying resiliency-focused trauma experience integration principles
- ◆ Trauma experience integration with Five-chapter multi-modal storytelling
- ◆ Managing regrets and shame; apologizing and making restitution
- ◆ Integration of principles and strategies from CPP, TF-CBT, Progressive Counting & Nightmare Rehearsal Therapy
- ◆ Application with a 17-year old in a residential treatment program
- ◆ Application with a 12-year old in a day treatment program

Chapter 11

- ◆ Highlighting a future building on talents and interests
- ◆ Enhancing a strength-oriented identity (pride) including how the youth and parents/caregivers help others, protect each other and manage stressors
- ◆ Identifying nurturing and supportive relationships to grow and sustain

Chapter 12

- ◆ Creating an integrated strength-based life story in words, art, music or videos
- ◆ Helping other youths and families going through hard times and traumas (sharing wisdom and skills learned)

Advanced workshop modules address developing strategies for challenges to trauma treatment along with critical issues in trauma treatment identified in each organization.

V. *Caregiver Engagement, Power, & Resilience*

- ◆ Principles, strategies and practice tips designed to engage parents/caregivers based on attachment, trauma and resiliency research, initial messages to demonstrate authentic respect
- ◆ Engaging parents/caregivers as heroes with authentic respect recognizing what they have done to help their families survive adversity
- ◆ Building on parents/caregivers' caring and wishes for their children to re-attune, restore or strengthen positive interactions, and help youths and themselves co-regulate intense feelings
- ◆ Creating heroes teams including parents/caregivers as family leaders
- ◆ Using SOS for Stress with parents/caregivers
- ◆ Empowering parents/caregivers to restore safety and use an enhanced understanding of neurobiology, repeated family interactions and the power of attuned, committed parenting to change repeated trauma reaction cycles and testing of changes by youths
- ◆ Helping parents/caregivers understand and use what they have learned from their own experiences with adversity and traumatic stress
- ◆ Finding respectful ways for parents/caregivers to accept youths' experiences, acknowledge their own mistakes, apologize when appropriate, and make lasting changes

## VI. *Prevention of Secondary Traumatic Stress for Caregivers and Therapists*

- ◆ Assessment of practitioner and caregiver Secondary PTSD and compassion fatigue
- ◆ Principles, strategies, and practice tips to prevent secondary PTSD or burn-out by organizations, teams, therapists and caregivers
- ◆ Putting principles into daily action

## VII. *Adaptations*

- ◆ Engaging and sustaining engagement with older youths, building on talents, passions and caring, promoting positive relationships and role transitions, rebuilding positive connections to youths' cultural heritage
- ◆ Recognizing and building on strengths and reducing stress in highly stressed foster and adoptive families, building on caring and commitment, accepting loss and grief, preventing and reducing traumatic stress reactions
- ◆ Recognizing and building on strengths and finding ways to promote youths reaching their potential in families with neuro-atypical youths or youths with intellectual deficits
- ◆ Working with refugee youths and families, living with uncertainty, respecting cultural norms, building on strengths, connections and cultural heritage

### Clinical consultation sessions include:

- ◆ Practice strategies, tips, and checkpoints matched to each chapter, moving through the *RLH Life Storybook*
- ◆ Youth and family-focused consultation using the *RLH Trauma & Resiliency-focused Assessment & Service Plan* with practitioner families
- ◆ Identification of challenges for trauma treatment and development of strategies for model adaptation to overcome challenges
- ◆ Implementation by therapists and programs with diverse families and programs.

### Consultation with supervisors and directors addresses:

- ◆ Pre-training assessments
- ◆ Development of training programs
- ◆ Coordination of workshops and consultation
- ◆ Trauma and resiliency-focused supervision

- ◆ Use of fidelity tools
- ◆ Identification of challenges for therapists and programs
- ◆ Development of strategies to overcome challenges
- ◆ Infusion of trauma and resiliency-focused treatment into organizational policies and procedures
- ◆ Sustaining implementation after training

Organizational consultation is also available including:

- ◆ Review of program and organizational challenges
- ◆ Identification of organizational priorities
- ◆ Creating a learning community
- ◆ Integration of resiliency and trauma-informed services
- ◆ Fidelity monitoring
- ◆ Development of strategies to overcome challenges
- ◆ Infusion of trauma and resiliency-focused treatment into organizational policies
- ◆ Sustaining resiliency and trauma-focused treatment

## **Training Program Participants**

Participants in RLH training programs are typically social workers, psychologists, marriage and family therapists, and counselors working in behavioral health, child and family services, and educational programs serving children and families. Most therapists in RLH training programs have had previous training in trauma treatment, e.g. TF-CBT or EMDR, and are looking to expand skills, increase engagement and access additional tools developed and tested for use with youths and families with complex trauma. Therapists seeking RLH training have often been challenged to engage youths and families referred for treatment of high-risk behavior problems, youths who have not disclosed the most significant traumas in their lives, youths or parents/caregivers who refuse to work in trauma-focused treatment, youths who lack a safe, non-offending caregiver who is committed to raising them and able and willing to participate in trauma-focused treatment, families where suspected traumas have not been validated, and families who are grappling with multiple problems and traumas extending over generations and into the foreseeable future. RLH books and training programs provide a framework, strategies, tools and practice tips for engaging with these youths and families and expanding the reach of evidence supported trauma therapy, building on therapists' and organizations' previous training in trauma treatment.

## **Therapist Feedback on Training Programs and RLH Books**

“I have to share with you how helpful the curriculum has been. . . I use ‘My Thermometers’” with ALL of my clients - they even request it - . . . Thank you for this fantastic tool.”

“. . . I've witnessed how your Real Life Heroes program truly does assist children and their caretakers in processing their trauma and strengthening their relationship with each other. . . .”

“It's my real first attempt to implement and I am very very pleased with how quickly your format emphasizes safety and trust. Thank you Dr. Kagan for giving us this vehicle

to help families rebuild their bonds. . . . I was deeply moved earlier today with interactions between siblings and between child and parent-and all through the open doors your book allowed. . . .”

“Dr Kagan had a very nice way of presenting material that is playful and engaging. I have been given more ‘tools’ to use in this presentation than any other thus far (4th day of 5 day conference)

“Great presentation with provision of wonderful tools to use with children who are victims of any kind of trauma. . . .”

“Excellent participatory experiences. Clear, sequential—incorporated all essential ingredients”

“ . . . I truly enjoyed your trauma training and I honestly think it was one of the most valuable things I learned here. I can take the skills and strategies you taught us into the next chapter of my career and I am very appreciative of that. Thank you”

“Great experiential exercises”

“ . . . really awesome”

“I wanted to write you a quick note to say again how much I appreciated your presentation of "Real Life Heroes" last week. . . . I worked for over 22 years . . . and for many years I coordinated development of trauma recovery groups. I am impressed by the "Real Life Heroes" treatment and tool kit and want to thank you for your passion and work. “

“The creative activities were awesome!”

“Fantastico!!!”

## **Citations from Executive Directors, Program Directors, and Supervisors**

“This has been the most successful implementation of any treatment model we’ve offered.”

“I wanted to say again how much we enjoyed the training . . .(the therapists) said after you left that it was one of the best trainings they have ever had. . . . I am seeing a lot of Real Life Heroes in progress notes!”

“I have heard nothing but wonderful things about RLH from the staff! Sometimes a training may be well received, but it still isn’t something you see implemented very consistently. So it is especially wonderful to know that the staff are utilizing RLH.”

“It’s not ‘one more thing’, it’s ‘the thing.’”

“Everyone is talking about how much they enjoyed the training and how well it applies to our population. You did a wonderful job.”

“ . . . the evaluations . . . were very positive, and I was thrilled that staff were able to identify so many useful strategies and activities that they can use with the children and families.”

“It was beyond wonderful to have you here. Thank you so much for an amazing training and for bringing us together around this work.”

“Your training was interesting, inspiring (and fun!). I have to figure out a way to fit in some part time clinical practice!!”

“Your keynote presentation was well received and inspiring. We have received rave reviews for this conference and we owe a large part to your willingness to speak both as a keynote and workshop presenter.”

“Your presentation was excellent---and you covered a lot of material very clearly and succinctly.”

“Wonderful model . . . Thanks for the presentation.”

“I just wanted to thank you again for the training you did for us last week. I've heard nothing but positive, enthusiastic comments from the staff who attended.”

“The clinicians have enjoyed utilizing the workbook with their clients and have found it to be very successful in working with our children and families. . . .”

“I have has ONLY very positive feedback from folks that attended RLH last week. Thank you so much!!”

“It was beyond wonderful to have you here. Thank you so much for an amazing training and for bringing us together around this work. . . .”

“Dr Kagan had a very nice way of presenting material that is playful and engaging. I have been given more ‘tools’ to use in this presentation than any other thus far (4th day of 5 day conference)

“Great presentation with provision of wonderful tools to use with children who are victims of any kind of trauma. . . .”

“Excellent participatory experiences. Clear, sequential—incorporated all essential ingredients”

“Great experiential exercises”

“Your presentation was excellent---and you covered a lot of material very clearly and succinctly.”

“Wonderful model .... Thanks for the presentation.”

“It has been a wonderful year for the staff! We are so happy to have your model and your personal expertise to give us tools to serve the most vulnerable children.”

“I just wanted to thank you again for the training you did for us last week. I've heard nothing but positive, enthusiastic comments from the staff who attended. . . in our three days of training I really came to appreciate the breadth and depth of the model's theoretical underpinnings. It is a rich and beautiful model and I'm grateful for having had the opportunity to learn about it from you.”

## **Previous Training Sites**

RLH training has been provided to therapists at state-wide and national conferences, conferences for regional centers for excellence, university-based training programs, and child and family mental health and family service agencies in the U.S., Canada and Hong Kong including:

Adelphi University

American Professional Society on Abuse of Children, Annual Conferences

American Psychological Association, Annual Conference

Annie E. Casey Foundation/Casey Family Services and Casey Family Programs,  
National Convening on Youth Permanence

ATTACH, Annual Conference

Aurora Mental Health and Recovery, Aurora, Colorado

Bethany Christian Family Services, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Burrell Health Services, New Frontiers Conference, Springfield, Missouri  
 Catawba County Department of Social Services, Hickory, North Carolina  
 Child Advocacy Center of Greater St. Louis, St. Louis, Missouri  
 Child Welfare League of America, Annual Conference  
 Children's Home Society of Florida  
 Children's Institute International, Annual Conference  
 Children's Law Center Children's Law Conference, Columbia, South Carolina  
 Coalition of Adoption and Foster Family Agencies and the New York State Office  
 of Children and Family Services, Buffalo, New York  
 Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, Canada  
 Depelchin Children's Center, Annual Conference  
 Family Violence Sexual Assault Institute, the Children's Justice Task Force of  
 Oahu, Hawaii Youth Services Network, Catholic Charities Family Services  
 (Oahu), and Kapi'olani Child Protective Services, Honolulu, Hawaii  
 Hincks –Dellcrest Centre, Toronto, Ontario  
 Hong Kong Student Aid Society, Mark Memorial Home, Hong Kong, China  
 Institute of Violence, Abuse and Trauma, International Conference on Family  
 Violence  
 International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, Annual Conferences  
 Kaua'i Children's Justice Grant Committee, Lihue, Hawaii  
 Lund Family Center, Annual Conference  
 Mid-Maine Child Trauma Network Conference, Augusta, Maine  
 National Child Traumatic Stress Network All-Network Conferences  
 New Directions, Buffalo, New York  
 New York State Coalition for Children's Mental Health Services, Annual  
 Conferences  
 Oakland County Community Health, Oakland, Michigan  
 Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services,  
 Children's Conference  
 Parsons Child and Family Center, Albany, New York  
 Northeast Parent and Child Society, Schenectady, New York  
 San Diego International Conference on Child & Family Maltreatment, San Diego,  
 California  
 Sexual Trauma Services of the Midlands, Columbia, South Carolina  
 Southeast Center of Excellence, Chattanooga, Tennessee  
 Starfish Family Services, Westland, Michigan  
 State University of New York at Albany, School of Social Welfare  
 Toronto City Youth Development, Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
 United Counseling Services, Annual Conference, Bennington, Vermont  
 University of Buffalo, SUNY-Buffalo, School of Social Work  
 University of Wisconsin-Madison, Sex Abuse Treatment Conference  
 University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Summer Conference, Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
 Washington Department of Social Services  
 Western Michigan University, Child Trauma Assessment Center  
 Wisconsin Family Based Services Association, Green Bay, Wisconsin

## **Therapists' Education Level, Experience, Licensure and Certification**

Master's degree required in Social Work, Psychology, Counseling, Marriage and Family Therapy or related field for RLH Fundamentals. However, training programs often include Bachelor's-level social workers, family support workers, intensive in-home workers, residential counselors, foster parents, and other professionals working as part of trauma-informed teams with youths and families in child and family services, educational, or behavioral health programs under the supervision of licensed therapists.

Licensure or certification is not required to participate in training; however, therapists without licensure must be supervised within their agencies by licensed staff to implement RLH as a trauma treatment.

Experience working with children, adolescents and families in child welfare, school-based, behavioral health, justice-involved or refugee programs is recommended but not required to participate in training. Use of the RLH *Life Storybook*, session structure, and the *RLH Toolkit* promotes learning, confidence, and implementation by new therapists. At the same time, the RLH format and toolkit resources have been highly valued by advanced therapists looking to expand skills and add strategies and tools to their repertoire.

## **Fidelity**

Fidelity is assessed by program supervisor or training consultant reviews of practitioner implementation of key strategies and steps for assessment and treatment using four tools: the Trauma and Resiliency-focused Assessment and Service Planning tool, the RLH *Chapter Checkpoints*, the RLH *Progress Note (Abbreviated or Long Form)*, and the RLH *Service Plan Review*. These tools include key tasks and points to be covered for each chapter of the workbook, in each treatment session, and in service plan reviews. These tools include key tasks and points to be covered for each chapter of the workbook, in each treatment session, and in service plan reviews. Evaluations of fidelity are rated for each chapter and component of RLH Treatment with a 3-point scale: Low, Moderate, High. Moderate levels are required to demonstrate fidelity. Fidelity ratings are evaluated for individual therapists and for programs as part of a QI approach to identify challenges and develop solutions in programs.

In addition, reviews by supervisors of practitioner's use of the RLH Trauma and Resiliency-focused Assessment and Service Planning tool provides information on assessment and treatment planning skills. Self-report surveys of trauma-informed knowledge, skills and organizational policies and practices are also used to develop training programs and can be repeated after training programs along with pre-post practitioner stress evaluations to assess development of trauma-informed programs and reduction of secondary PTSD.

# Certificates for Completion of the RLH Fundamentals Training Program, RLH Certificate-level Training and CE Credits

Certificates of Completion are available for therapists who complete all components of the 24-hour RLH On-Demand or live streamed RLH Fundamentals Training Program including passing quizzes. Certificate-level RLH Training can also be arranged for therapists in organizations who demonstrate participation in: 24 hours of on-demand or in-person workshops, 10 small group consultation sessions, and weekly or biweekly supervision or consultation within agencies/programs by supervisors trained in RLH along with completion of all RLH Fundamentals practice activities and implementation of RLH with four youths and families with at least moderate fidelity certified by agency/program supervisors. Fidelity assessments are based on completion of the four fidelity measures described above.

Real Life Heroes® Fundamentals: Resiliency-focused Therapy for Children and Families with Complex Trauma, Course #5323, was approved by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) Approved Continuing Education (ACE) program to be offered by Training Programs on Traumatic Stress as an individual course. Regulatory boards are the final authority on courses accepted for continuing education credit. ACE course approval period: **11/21/2023 - 11/21/2025**. Social workers completing this course by 11/21/25 received 24 clinical continuing education credits. This was a 24-credit CE program (14.5 CE credits from recorded videos and 9.5 CE credits from readings). Extending approval for CE credits is currently being explored with an alternative platform.

CE credits can also be arranged by sponsoring agencies or programs with state and national accreditation bodies using RLH curriculum materials included in this document. Assistance will be provided by Dr. Kagan. These typically need to be arranged prior to training programs.

## Training Costs

Registration fees for the 24-hour *RLH On-Demand Training* are currently set at a reduced rate, \$99/therapist, to promote access for hard-pressed treatment centers. Registration details are available at: <https://reallifeheroes.thinkific.com/courses/real-life-heroes-fundamentals-resiliency-focused-therapy-for-complex-traumas>

Typical training costs include purchase for each therapist of one *Real Life Heroes Toolkit*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition<sup>1</sup> (Paperback, approximately \$83, or e book, \$63), one *Real Life Heroes Life Storybook*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition<sup>2</sup> (Paperback, \$40 or e book, \$30), peacock feathers for therapists (35-40 inches, 90- 100 cm long, approximately \$1 each for 20, 50 or 100

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<sup>1</sup> Available from Routledge Press at: <https://www.routledge.com/Real-Life-Heroes-Toolkit-for-Treating-Traumatic-Stress-in-Children-and/Kagan/p/book/9781138963474>

<sup>2</sup> Available from Routledge Press at: <https://www.routledge.com/Real-Life-Heroes-Life-Storybook/Kagan/p/book/9780415518048>

feathers), and small xylophones/two-octave note bells (approximately \$20 each e.g. on Amazon). Books are available from Routledge.com<sup>3</sup> or Amazon at discounted prices. Additional creative arts supplies are recommended but not required. RLH books can be translated by interested organizations by contracting with Routledge Press. Total cost of *RLH On Demand*, 2 e books, small xylophone and two peacock feathers is approximately \$214/therapist for this 24 CE credit program.

Small group and organizational consultation are highly recommended in conjunction with *RLH On Demand* and includes ten months of video streamed small group clinical consultation with ideally 4-8 therapists per group (\$3000/group) and five bi-monthly consultation sessions for supervisors and directors (\$750/program).

*Each training program is tailored to work best with an organization including staff time available and funding. Live video streamed workshops are also available. Please contact Dr. Kagan to work out a training plan that would be optimal for your organization.*

**NCTSN federal grant funding may be available for 2025-26 through the Adelphi University Institute for Adolescent Trauma Treatment & Training to cover training costs for a limited number of organizations in the United States serving youths and families with Complex Trauma/DTD. Priority will be given to non-profit and state-funded organizations who demonstrate a commitment to move forward with implementation and are willing to provide feedback on training programs. Priority will also be given to programs serving providing services to trauma-exposed youths in urban and rural high-risk schools, justice-involved youths, and refugee/asylum-seeking youths. Selected programs will be eligible for the combined *RLH Fundamentals Training Program* including *RLH On-Demand*, small group clinical consultation and supervisory consultation. {Note: Grant-funding does not cover costs for books or creative arts supplies.} A limited number of grant-funded video-streamed (live) train-the-trainer programs may also be available in 2025-26 for directors, supervisors, or consultants to lead training programs as ‘in-house trainers’ with their own staff using *RLH On Demand* and other *RLH* resources.**

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<sup>3</sup> Routledge provides a 40% discount for organizational purchases for RLH books and tax-free purchases for non-profit organizations. Discounts may be obtained by contacting John Defalco, Routledge Account Manager, at: john.defalco@taylorandfrancis.com or call: 917-351-7128

## **Application for Grant-funded Training Provided by the Adelphi University Institute for Adolescent Trauma Treatment & Training**

If you are interested in applying for grant funding for the combined RLH Fundamentals Training Program, please complete and e mail a *RLH Team Application* as indicated on the application. Approved teams will receive a coupon to waive costs for therapists and supervisors or directors to register for RLH On-Demand and will also be notified about how to arrange small group clinical consultation and supervisory consultation calls.

### **Contact Information for RLH Training Programs**

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Training Programs on Traumatic Stress  
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