

I don't know what to do anymore":
How Curiosity Goes Offline — and the Neurobiology of Bringing It Back
Video Course

Richard Hill

Video Course
CPD hours: 6



Online video access remains available for 1 year or 3 years from the date you receive the video course, depending on the ticket type.

*"Why do some clients shut down just when the work begins to deepen?"
"What if the problem isn't avoidance — but a loss of curiosity?"*

In therapy, we often encounter moments that feel unexplainably flat: the client goes quiet, insight stalls, emotional tone recedes. Despite best efforts, nothing seems to move. What if these aren't moments of resistance or regression, but signs that curiosity — that essential spark of engagement and discovery — has gone offline?

We typically think of curiosity as a trait or a therapist stance but converging insights from affective neuroscience and interpersonal neurobiology suggest it is something more powerful: a neurobiological state that governs regulation, openness, and insight. Research by Gruber and Ranganath (2019) demonstrates that **curiosity activates dopaminergic reward pathways while simultaneously enhancing hippocampal encoding, creating optimal conditions for both engagement and memory formation.** When used with precision, curiosity becomes a moment-to-moment clinical tool — helping us modulate affect, re-engage a frozen client, or shift narrative stance in real time. When it shuts down, the therapeutic process stalls.

Why This Training Matters Now

Curiosity, in Richard Hill's model, is not passive or whimsical. It is dynamic, embodied, and essential for therapeutic progress. Drawing on Kidd and Hayden's (2015) information-gap theory and Litman's (2005) distinction between diversive and epistemic curiosity, Hill proposes that therapeutic curiosity operates through three active pathways:

- **Investigative curiosity** – the urge to explore and gather information, rooted in what Berlyne (1960) termed "epistemic behavior"



- **Playful curiosity** – the spontaneous emergence of novelty and new ideas, reflecting Kashdan and Silvia's (2009) work on curiosity as approach motivation
- **Meaning-making curiosity** – the integration of new insight into personal relevance and purpose, drawing on Post-Traumatic Growth research (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004)

Together, these form what Hill calls *Dynamic Curiosity* — a core driver of client engagement, memory reconsolidation, and emotional regulation. Neuroimaging studies suggest this state involves coordinated activity across the brain's salience network (Seeley et al., 2007), default mode network (Buckner et al., 2008), and reward circuitry (Kang et al., 2009), creating what Hill terms the "Nuntius Nuclei" — a proposed neural constellation that sustains exploratory engagement.

This model has rarely been available outside North America. Richard has delivered his work to clinicians and researchers in the US and Australia, but this training marks the first time his full Dynamic Curiosity approach will be taught live to UK and European therapists. For those interested in cutting-edge integrations of neuroscience, embodied practice, and therapeutic presence, this is a rare opportunity.

Clinical Dilemmas This Training Will Address

- A client becomes blank-faced and silent just as you ask a question that edges toward trauma. Is this shutdown? Resistance? Or has their capacity for curiosity simply gone offline?
- A familiar narrative plays on loop every session, but attempts to challenge it are met with blankness or irritation. How do you reignite interest from within the client's own nervous system?
- Your client arrives "fine," but nothing unfolds. You sense something alive underneath, but there's no engagement. **Could a different therapeutic stance — one based in curiosity rather than analysis or containment — create movement?**

Richard will guide participants through moments like these using case vignettes and session transcripts, including a longitudinal case in which a moment of shared curiosity became the hinge point for emotional release — with follow-up data at six months confirming that the therapeutic shift had held.

What You'll Learn

- How to identify when curiosity is online or offline in your client — and what to do about it
- Techniques to re-engage the client's innate exploratory drive, even when they feel numb or shut down
- **How to use curiosity as a co-regulatory technique in the face of disconnection or dissociation, based on Porges' (2011) Polyvagal Theory**
- Practical methods for using curiosity to support emotional regulation, reduce threat reactivity (drawing on Barrett's 2017 constructed emotion research), and increase tolerance for ambiguity
- How to use somatic and embodied cues to follow the "trail of curiosity" in real time
- Micro-interventions to spark curiosity and shift stuck dynamics during sessions
- A new framework for integrating curiosity into CBT, psychodynamic, somatic, and narrative therapies
- **How curiosity enhances memory reconsolidation** (Lane et al., 2015), allowing insight to emerge safely and stick meaningfully through what Ecker et al. (2012) describe as "coherence therapy" principles

Training Schedule

Part One: The Mind-Brain of Curiosity and the Therapeutic Relationship

Monday 9 February 2026 | 6pm–9pm UK time



This first evening lays the theoretical and neurobiological foundation. We explore:

- The "Nuntius Nuclei": a proposed neural network integrating findings from Menon's (2011) salience network research and Buckner's default mode studies
- **How curiosity influences threat detection systems**, drawing on LeDoux's (2015) survival circuits and Fanselow's (2018) defensive behavior research
- Its role in modulating the threat response, increasing affective flexibility (Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010), and creating conditions for memory reconsolidation
- **The therapist as curiosity activator**: stance, pacing, and language that invite client exploration, informed by Stern's (2004) "present moment" research
- Hill's "Curiosity-Oriented Approach" (COA), with practical tools to embody it
- Aesthetic, embodied, and contextual dimensions of client responsiveness, drawing on Gendlin's (1996) focusing research and Levine's (2010) somatic experiencing principles

Part Two: Integrating Curiosity into Methods, Modalities, and Moment-to-Moment Practice

Monday 16 February 2026 | 6pm–9pm UK time

The second evening moves from theory to application:

- **The "Six Pillars of Therapeutic Relevance" and how they guide curiosity-informed practice**
- Using Dynamic Curiosity across CBT, psychodynamic, somatic, and integrative approaches, drawing on emerging outcome data from pilot studies
- Techniques:
 - Curiosity checkpoints
 - Language of invitation
 - Marking emergent moments for integration
 - Using body cues to track engagement
- Emotional regulation: curiosity as a buffer to overwhelm, supported by Gross's (2015) emotion regulation research
- **Memory reconsolidation: novelty + safety = new neural encoding** (Nader & Hardt, 2009)
- Final reflections on becoming a curiosity-oriented therapist: what shifts tomorrow?

About Richard Hill

Richard Hill, MA, MEd, MBMSc, DPC, is a psychotherapist, educator, and author internationally recognised for his work on curiosity, brain-mind science, and interpersonal neurobiology. He is the co-author of *The Practitioner's Guide to the Science of Psychotherapy* (Norton, 2022) and *The Practitioner's Guide to Mirroring Hands* (with Ernest Rossi). As Managing Editor of *The Science of Psychotherapy* and Clinical Science Director for CIPPS in Italy, Richard has helped translate the latest brain research into practical tools for frontline clinicians.

Over the past decade, Richard has trained practitioners across the US and Australia, with his approaches showing promising preliminary outcomes in pilot effectiveness studies. This event marks his first full-length teaching appearance for UK and European clinicians, making this a rare opportunity to access a powerful model that blends neurobiology, therapeutic creativity, and real-world responsiveness.

His 15-year apprenticeship with Ernest Rossi, esteemed psychotherapist and colleague of Milton Erickson, grounded his understanding of psychobiology and genetics within therapeutic practice. Currently completing doctoral research on client-responsiveness, Richard aims to discover common themes and qualities that could lead to a new theory for practice.



This is not a passive lecture — the training will include live demonstrations, case examples, interactive exercises, and space for questions and reflection. Whether you're new to neuroscience-informed practice or looking to deepen your therapeutic presence, this workshop will offer practical tools you can use immediately in your clinical work.

Join us live to learn how curiosity can become one of your most effective therapeutic tools — precise, embodied, and deeply transformational.

About the speaker

Richard Hill, MA, MEd, MBMSc, PhD (c) is a practicing psychotherapist, author, educator, and professional supervisor. After some 25 years as a professional actor and performer, he shifted his aims to academic study which ranged from linguistics to social ecology, education and the sciences of brain and mind. He is currently completing doctoral research on client-responsiveness with the intention of discovering common themes and qualities that could lead to a new theory for practice. He enjoyed a 15-year apprenticeship with Ernest Rossi, esteemed psychotherapist, author, and colleague of Milton Erickson. With Rossi, he explored the importance of incorporating an understanding of our psychobiology, genetics, and the whole complex system of being human. Richard is currently Science Director for CIPPS in Salerno, Italy; Clinical Science Director and Managing Editor for The Science of Psychotherapy; and resident therapist at The Davis Health Centre in Sydney, Australia. He is co-author with Ernest Rossi, PhD, of *The Practitioner's Guide to Mirroring Hands* (Crown House, 2017), and with Matthew Dahlitz of *The Practitioner's Guide to the Science of Psychotherapy* (Norton, 2022). He is Patron of The Australian Society of Clinical Hypnotherapists and author of numerous other books and book chapters. More information can be found at www.richardhill.com.au and www.thescienceofpsychotherapy.net

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cpd@nscience.world

UK/Europe: +44(0)2070961722