



# Whole-Human Therapy™ Professional Competency Framework

A New Standard in Holistic Mental Health

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# WHOLE-HUMAN THERAPY FRAMEWORK™

## Executive Summary

Mental health care is increasingly recognising the complex relationship between psychological experience, physiological regulation and embodied physical states. Traditional models of care have often separated mental and physical wellbeing into distinct domains, with psychological therapies focusing primarily on cognition and emotional processing while physical disciplines address lifestyle, movement and bodily health.

However, growing research across neuroscience, trauma studies and embodied psychology suggests that emotional wellbeing is closely linked to the functioning of the autonomic nervous system and the body's physiological responses to stress, safety and relational experience. These insights highlight the importance of approaches that consider the whole person rather than isolated aspects of mental or physical health.

Whole-Human Therapy™ was developed as an integrative framework that recognises the dynamic interaction between mind, movement, touch and nervous system regulation. Rather than replacing established therapeutic modalities, the model provides a structure through which psychological and embodied approaches to wellbeing can work together within a coherent and collaborative system of care.

As interest in integrative approaches to mental health continues to grow, the need for clear professional standards becomes increasingly important. Without defined competencies, interdisciplinary wellbeing practices may vary significantly in quality, scope and ethical awareness.

The Whole-Human Therapy™ Professional Competency Framework has therefore been developed to establish a clear set of standards for practitioners working within this model. The framework outlines the knowledge, behaviours and professional responsibilities required to support safe, ethical and integrated practice.

Six core competency domains form the foundation of the framework:

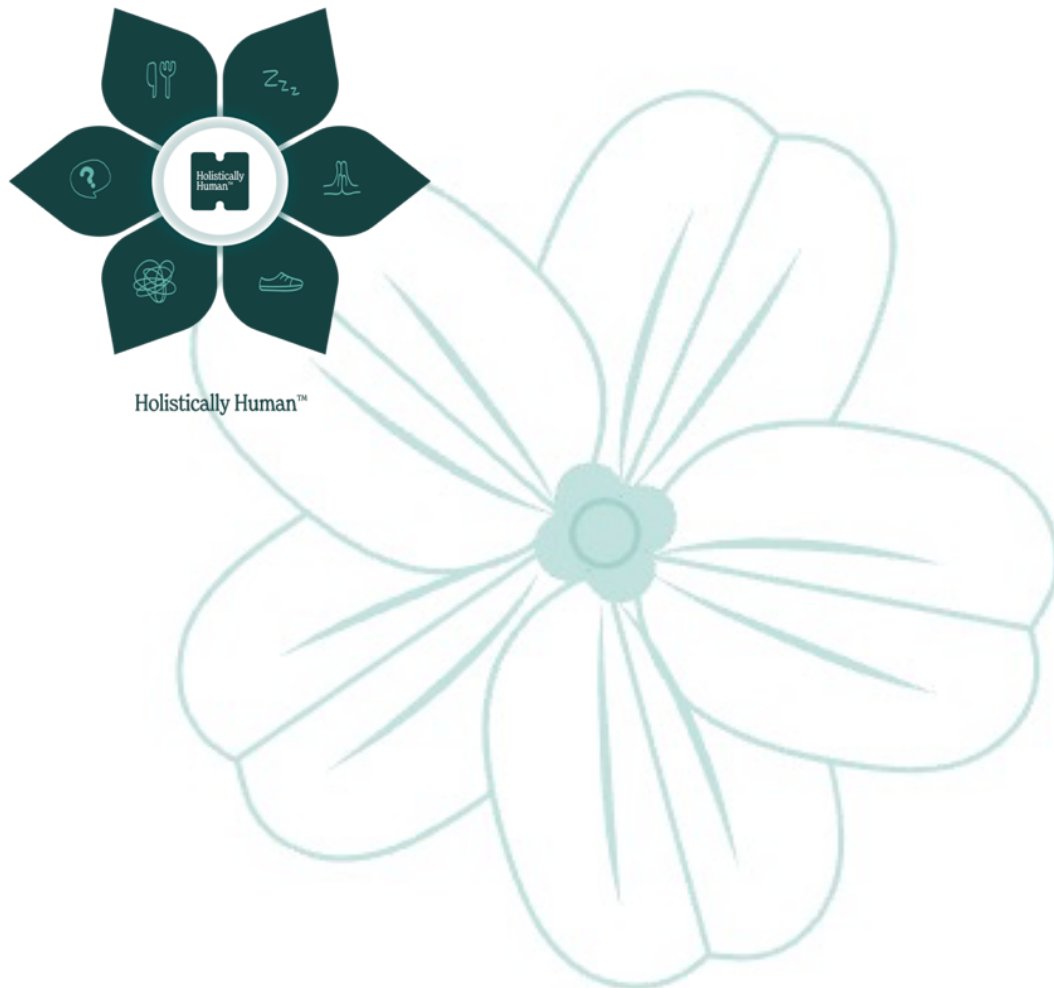
1. Trauma-Informed Awareness
2. Nervous System Literacy
3. Scope of Practice and Ethical Integrity
4. Collaborative Practice
5. Client Safety and Professional Boundaries
6. Professional Responsibility and Development

These domains recognise that effective holistic mental health support requires both psychological understanding and awareness of physiological regulation, alongside strong ethical practice and interdisciplinary collaboration.

The framework also introduces a developmental pathway through which practitioners may progress from foundational awareness to integrated and advanced levels of professional competency. This progression reflects the ongoing nature of professional learning and the importance of reflective practice within therapeutic work.

By establishing shared competency standards, the Whole-Human Therapy™ model aims to support a consistent level of professional integrity across practitioners and disciplines. In doing so, the framework seeks to promote safe integrative care, strengthen collaboration between mental health and wellbeing professionals, and contribute to the continued evolution of holistic approaches to emotional wellbeing.

Over time, the development of competency standards may also provide a foundation for future accreditation pathways, professional recognition and broader adoption of integrative models within mental health and wellbeing services.



# Why a Whole-Human Model is Needed Now

Across many countries, mental health services are facing increasing demand. Rising levels of anxiety, stress, burnout and emotional distress have placed significant pressure on existing care systems. While traditional psychological therapies remain an essential component of mental health support, many individuals seeking help also experience physical symptoms such as chronic tension, fatigue, disrupted sleep and persistent stress-related conditions.

These experiences highlight an important reality: emotional wellbeing does not exist in isolation from the body.

Emerging research across neuroscience, trauma studies and embodied psychology has increasingly demonstrated that emotional states are closely connected to physiological processes, particularly the regulation of the autonomic nervous system. Experiences of safety, threat, connection and stress influence not only psychological perception but also bodily responses such as muscle tension, heart rate variability and patterns of activation or withdrawal.

As a result, many individuals experience emotional distress through both psychological and physiological pathways.

Despite this growing understanding, systems of care often remain fragmented. Mental health services may focus primarily on cognitive and emotional processing, while physical wellbeing disciplines emphasise exercise, movement or lifestyle factors. Although each of these approaches can offer meaningful benefits, they frequently operate within separate professional structures.

This separation can create gaps in care where individuals receive support for one aspect of their wellbeing while other contributing factors remain unaddressed.

The Whole-Human Therapy™ framework was developed in response to this challenge. The model recognises that emotional wellbeing emerges from the interaction between psychological processes, nervous system regulation and embodied experience. Rather than viewing mental and physical health as separate domains, the framework encourages practitioners to consider the whole person within an integrated understanding of wellbeing.

Within this model, psychological therapies, movement-based approaches and body-oriented practices are not viewed as competing methods but as complementary perspectives that can contribute to emotional resilience when applied within appropriate professional boundaries.

However, integration across disciplines also introduces important responsibilities. Without clear ethical guidance and professional standards, interdisciplinary wellbeing approaches can risk confusion around scope of practice, safety considerations and professional accountability.

For this reason, the development of structured competency frameworks is essential.

The Whole-Human Therapy™ Professional Competency Framework provides a structured foundation through which practitioners from different backgrounds can engage with integrative care in a safe, ethical and collaborative manner. By defining core competencies such as trauma-informed awareness, nervous system literacy and professional scope integrity, the framework aims to support consistency and professional responsibility across the practitioner network.

In doing so, the model contributes to a broader shift within health and wellbeing professions toward more integrated understandings of emotional health.

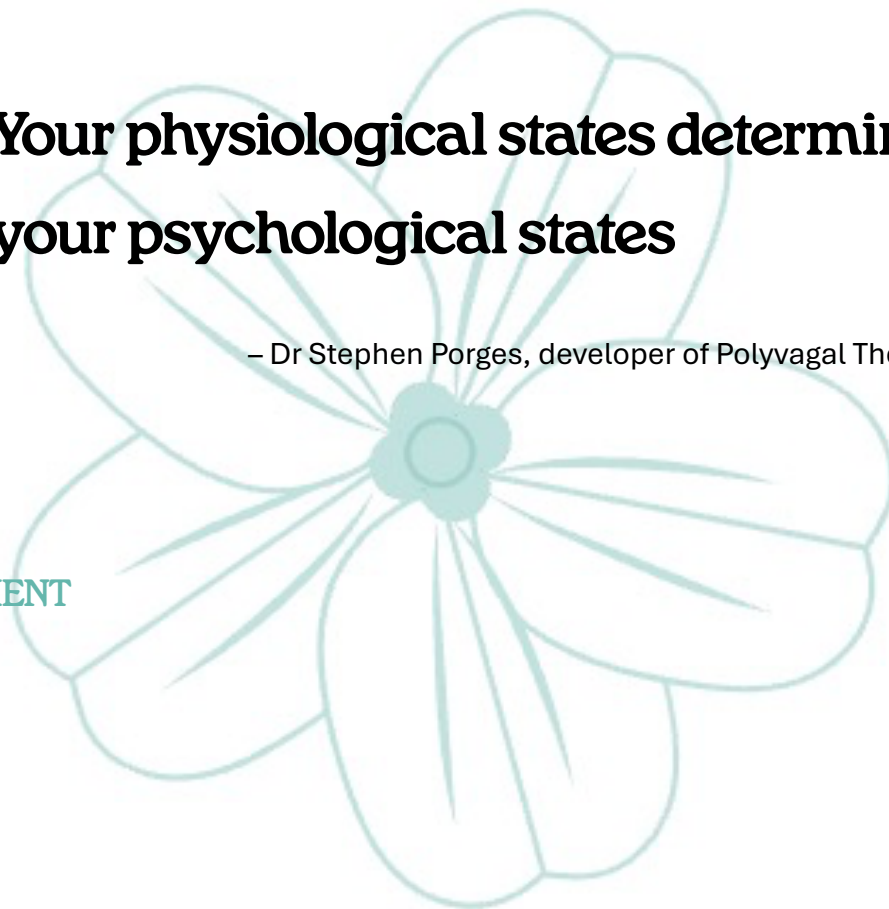
As scientific understanding of mind-body interaction continues to expand, frameworks that support safe interdisciplinary collaboration may play an increasingly important role in shaping the future of mental health care.

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**Your physiological states determine  
your psychological states**

– Dr Stephen Porges, developer of Polyvagal Theory

MIND  
MOVEMENT  
TOUCH



# WHOLE-HUMAN THERAPY FRAMEWORK™

## 1. Purpose

The Whole-Human Therapy™ Professional Competency Framework defines the core standards required for practitioners operating within the Whole-Human model of integrative mental health.

The framework establishes a shared professional foundation that enables counsellors, therapists and wellbeing practitioners to work safely, ethically and collaboratively within a holistic care environment.

Whole-Human Therapy™ recognises that emotional wellbeing emerges through the dynamic interaction between psychological experience, nervous system regulation and embodied physical states.

As a result, competency within this model extends beyond formal qualification alone. Practitioners are expected to demonstrate capability across multiple professional dimensions including:

- Ethical professional behaviour
- Trauma-informed awareness
- Nervous system literacy
- Clear scope of practice
- Collaborative interdisciplinary practice
- Commitment to professional development

This framework ensures that all approved practitioners maintain a consistent standard of care while contributing to a safe and integrated therapeutic network.

## 2. Core Competency Areas

Practitioners operating within the Whole-Human Therapy™ model must demonstrate competence across six core professional domains.

These domains represent the foundational capabilities required to deliver safe, ethical and integrated care within the Whole-Human framework.

### The Six Core Domains

1. Trauma-Informed Awareness
2. Nervous System Literacy
3. Scope of Practice & Ethical Integrity
4. Collaborative Practice
5. Client Safety & Professional Boundaries
6. Professional Responsibility & Development

Together these competencies support practitioners in delivering care that recognises the complex interaction between psychological processes, embodied experience and nervous system regulation.

## 3. Competency Levels

The Whole-Human Therapy™ framework recognises that professional development occurs progressively through practice, experience and continued learning.

Practitioners may demonstrate competency across three levels of professional integration.

### Level 1 – Foundation Awareness

Practitioners demonstrate understanding of core principles within the Whole-Human model and apply these concepts with appropriate guidance and supervision.

At this stage practitioners are developing familiarity with trauma-informed practice, nervous system awareness and integrated care principles.

### Level 2 – Integrated Practitioner

Practitioners confidently apply the Whole-Human framework within their professional practice.

They demonstrate the ability to integrate psychological, relational and physiological awareness while maintaining clear professional boundaries and scope of practice.

### Level 3 – Advanced / Accredited Practitioner

Advanced practitioners demonstrate depth of integration within the Whole-Human model.

They may contribute to mentoring, training, supervision or professional leadership within the practitioner network while modelling best practice standards.

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## 4. Domain 1: Trauma-Informed Awareness

Trauma-informed awareness is a foundational element of Whole-Human Therapy™. Practitioners recognise that past experiences of stress, trauma or adversity can influence both psychological and physiological regulation.

Understanding trauma responses enables practitioners to create emotionally safe therapeutic environments and avoid practices that may inadvertently trigger re-traumatisation.

### Foundation Level

Practitioners demonstrate:

- Understanding of the potential impact of trauma on both mind and body
- Awareness of the concept of the “window of tolerance”
- Use of consent-led and client-centred practice
- Commitment to avoiding re-traumatisation within sessions

## Integrated Level

Practitioners demonstrate:

- Ability to adjust pacing and intensity based on client nervous system states
- Recognition of signs of trauma activation or overwhelm
- Maintenance of emotional safety during therapeutic engagement
- Appropriate referral when needs fall outside professional scope

## Advanced Level

Practitioners demonstrate:

- Ability to support client regulation within sessions
- Consistent use of trauma-informed communication
- Contribution to a culture of psychological safety within the practitioner network

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# 5. Domain 2: Nervous System Literacy

Whole-Human Therapy™ recognises the central role of the autonomic nervous system in shaping emotional and behavioural responses.

Practitioners are expected to develop an understanding of how physiological regulation influences emotional wellbeing and therapeutic engagement.

## Foundation Level

Practitioners demonstrate:

- Basic understanding of nervous system responses and stress physiology
- Awareness of common stress responses such as fight, flight, freeze and shutdown
- Understanding the difference between emotional processing and nervous system regulation

## Integrated Level

Practitioners demonstrate:

- Ability to apply regulation-focused approaches within sessions
- Sensitivity to client physiological states and pacing
- Support for grounding, safety and stabilisation where appropriate

## Advanced Level

Practitioners demonstrate:

- Ability to communicate nervous system concepts clearly to clients
  - Integration of nervous system education within practice
  - Support for peer awareness and practitioner learning within the network
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## 6. Domain 3: Scope of Practice & Ethical Integrity

Whole-Human Therapy™ operates as a collaborative framework rather than a replacement for established professional disciplines.

Maintaining clear scope of practice is therefore essential to ensuring safe and ethical care.

### Foundation Level

Practitioners demonstrate:

- Clear understanding of their professional role and training boundaries
- Commitment to practising within their scope of competence
- Awareness of differences between wellbeing support and psychotherapy

### Integrated Level

Practitioners demonstrate:

- Ability to maintain professional boundaries when working with complex client needs
- Appropriate referral to qualified professionals where required
- Clear communication with clients regarding scope and expectations

### Advanced Level

Practitioners demonstrate:

- Leadership in promoting ethical practice across the practitioner network
  - Mentorship or guidance related to scope awareness and professional integrity
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## 7. Domain 4: Collaborative Practice

Whole-Human Therapy™ promotes collaboration across psychological, physical and wellbeing disciplines.

This collaborative approach allows practitioners to support individuals through an integrated care network rather than isolated interventions.

## Foundation Level

Practitioners demonstrate:

- Understanding of the value of integrated care
- Respect for the role of counselling and psychotherapy within emotional support
- Willingness to operate within referral and collaboration structures

## Integrated Level

Practitioners demonstrate:

- Effective communication within multidisciplinary practitioner networks
- Respectful engagement with professionals from different disciplines
- Awareness of shared-care principles

## Advanced Level

Practitioners demonstrate:

- Contribution to collaborative culture within the Whole-Human network
- Support for interdisciplinary understanding and professional learning

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# 8. Domain 5: Client Safety & Professional Boundaries

Client safety remains the highest priority within the Whole-Human Therapy™ framework.

Practitioners are expected to maintain ethical boundaries, protect confidentiality and ensure that clients are supported within an appropriate professional container.

## Foundation Level

Practitioners demonstrate:

- Commitment to confidentiality
- Use of informed consent practices
- Maintenance of appropriate professional boundaries

## Integrated Level

Practitioners demonstrate:

- Ability to recognise safeguarding concerns
- Appropriate responses to distress or vulnerability
- Maintenance of clear therapeutic boundaries

## Advanced Level

Practitioners demonstrate:

- Leadership in maintaining safe practice across the network
  - Contribution to ethical dialogue and professional standards
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# 9. Domain 6: Professional Responsibility & Development

Whole-Human Therapy™ recognises that professional competency evolves through ongoing learning, supervision and reflective practice.

Practitioners are expected to actively engage in professional development to maintain the integrity of the model.

## Foundation Level

Practitioners demonstrate:

- Participation in required training
- Engagement with supervision where appropriate
- Openness to professional feedback

## Integrated Level

Practitioners demonstrate:

- Reflective practice and professional self-awareness
- Ongoing continuing professional development (CPD)
- Contribution to practitioner learning communities

## Advanced Level

Practitioners demonstrate:

- Mentoring or supervision of other practitioners
  - Contribution to the continued development of the Whole-Human model
  - Representation of Whole-Human standards within wider professional contexts
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## 10. Assessment Methods

Competency within the Whole-Human Therapy™ framework is assessed through professional engagement and demonstrated practice rather than examination alone.

Evidence of competency may include:

- Completion of recognised training programmes
- Reflective practice documentation
- Participation in supervision
- Peer feedback and professional collaboration
- Contribution to practitioner networks
- Consistent ethical conduct

This practice-based model reflects the relational and experiential nature of therapeutic work.

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## 11. Requirements for Approved Practitioner Status

To maintain Whole-Human Therapy™ Approved Practitioner status, individuals must:

- Maintain appropriate professional insurance
- Hold relevant professional registration where applicable
- Attend required training within the Whole-Human framework
- Maintain ethical and safe practice
- Operate within their professional scope
- Engage in ongoing professional development
- Uphold the professional reputation of the Whole-Human model

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## 12. Pathway to Accredited Status (Future Development)

As the Whole-Human Therapy™ model continues to evolve, an advanced accreditation pathway may be established.

Accredited Whole-Human Practitioners would be expected to:

- Demonstrate consistent integration of the framework in practice
- Participate in supervision and advanced training
- Contribute to practitioner development within the network
- Support the continued evolution of the model

Over time, this pathway may support the development of a nationally recognised benchmark for integrative holistic mental health practice.

Together we aim to promote positive change, enhance mental wellbeing and improve physical health. We do this by embracing the latest thinking in therapeutic practice and medical research by encompassing the intrinsic link between mind and body.



### Contact details

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