

What To Do With Your Polyvagal System

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The Science of Tsuris

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3 Organizing Principles of Polyvagal Theory

- Hierarchy, Neuroception, and Co-Regulation,
- **Hierarchy** - The ANS responds to sensations in the body and signals from the environment through 3 pathways
 - - Ventral Vagus – social engagement and connection (Newest)
 - - Sympathetic – mobilization [Fight, Flight and Frenzy] (Middle)
 - - Dorsal Vagus – immobilization (Oldest)
- We want to be firmly grounded in the Ventral Vagal pathway

Polyvagal Ladder – Visual Prompt



VENTRAL

Safe & Social
Feeling secure and connected
to people around you

SYMPATHETIC

Mobilized for fight or flight
Feeling stressed or
agitated

DORSAL

Shutdown
Feeling disconnected or numb

*Adapted from *The Polyvagal Theory
in Therapy* by Deb Dana

Neuroception

- Neuroception precedes perception. Even before the brain makes meaning of an incident, the ANS has assessed the environment and begun an adaptive survival response.
- “Because we humans are meaning-making beings, what begins as the wordless experiencing of neuroception drives the creation of a story that shapes our daily living”
- What happens in the body when neuroception and perception occur?

The story your body tells.... Keep the automatic story or Re-Story

Add: “Check the Facts” to your tool kit.

Re-Storying and NEUROPLASTICITY

We can't increase the number of brain cells we have, BUT WE CAN CHANGE HOW THEY ARE ORGANIZED AND WIRED

Co-Regulation

- Occurs between individuals. Goal is safety. Autonomic safety is the preamble to connection and creating trusting relationships. Co-regulation is a biological need. “Supported by co-regulating relationships, we become resilient. In relationships awash in experiences of misattunement, we become masters of survival.”
- “Hopefulness lies in knowing that while early experiences shape the nervous system, ongoing experiences can reshape it.” Neuroplasticity!
- Eye contact, physical distance, validating statements.....
- Approach with Curiosity, not fear or anger.

Triggers and Glimmers

- Triggers and Glimmers are identifiable
- Glimmers can help calm a nervous system in survival mode and bring a return of autonomic regulation
- Even brief experiences of positive emotion can build enduring resources. Multiple micro movements can lead a system toward a tipping point of autonomic balance.
- Evidence that small successes change brain structure (Neuroplasticity)
- Bring attention to small moments of safety!

Mapping The Polyvagal Ladder and Triggers and Glimmers

Ventral Vagal

- Safe/Social

Here I feel:

Glimmers

Sympathetic

- Fight/Flight/Frenzy

Here I feel:

Triggers

Dorsal Vagal

- Immobilized

Here I feel:

Triggers

Engaging the Vagus Nerve

1. Recognize the autonomic state
 - Map your Polyvagal Ladder and Glimmers and Triggers
2. Regulate using the breath
 - Out breath count longer than in breath
 - 4-2-6-2 Breathing
3. Co-Regulate with others. Everyone has different Co-regulation needs.
4. When helping yourself or others to reach Ventral Vagal Safety remember to be careful of the energy shifts you are suggesting.
 - Walk don't Run
 - ex/ Reading about Mindfulness
 - Just sit with someone
 - Posture change
5. Humm and Ohm – or listen to Ohm music
6. Nature, Art, Stillness – all to come!

Compassionate Connection

- Befriending: bringing oneself into connection with our autonomic stories with curiosity and without judgement
- Using Breathwork to find Compassion (Slow down to fight the natural inclination toward judgement)
- The “Art” of autonomic awareness through artwork, music, movement, and writing.

RESILIENCE

- In the Polyvagal Theory, Resilience is the ability to utilize our Vagal Brake to move flexibly between from one state to another (up and down the Polyvagal ladder)
- Resilience builds over time and we all have the ability to practice and build resilience.

Emerging Information on Vagus Nerve Stimulation

- Acupuncture [Neuroanatomic and clinical correspondences: acupuncture and vagus nerve stimulation - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)
- Vagus Nerve Stimulation [Vagus nerve stimulation - Mayo Clinic](#)
- Oseamalibu.org – Vagus Nerve Oil (?) – Combination of essential oils.

Resources

- Stephen Porges (2011). The Polyvagal Theory.
- Bessel Van Der Kolk (2014). The Body Keeps The Score.
- Deb Dana (2018). The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy: Engaging the Rhythm of Regulation.
- Deb Dana (2020). Polyvagal Exercises for Safety and Connection: 50 Client-Centered Practices
- [Deb Dana | A Polyvagal Approach to Covid 19 | Webinar with PCPSI 4K – YouTube](#)
- [How to Befriend Your Nervous System During Quarantine - YouTube](#)

- **Web resources:**
- Samehereglobal.org for STARR Exercises: Building your mental health toolbox [Home | Same Here Global](#)
- Youtube videos for Ohm music [OM Chanting @417 Hz | Removes All Negative Blocks - Bing video](#)
- and Voo Breathing [Reduce Stress - 2 Minute Voo Technique - Katie Brauer – YouTube](#)

- <https://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/news/press/2020/approved/20200323b.html>
- Domestic Abuse Hotline: (800) 799-7233 <https://www.thehotline.org/2020/03/13/staying-safe-during-covid-19/>
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline: (800) 273-8255