

Nervous System Befriending A Polyvagal Understanding



What The World Has Just Too Little Of...

- Feeling friendly towards how our nervous system is responding starts with being curious
- Even a little curiosity can lead to acceptance and change



Befriending Our Nervous System

Dorsal- Controls below the diaphragm for digestion, reproduction **Freeze response**

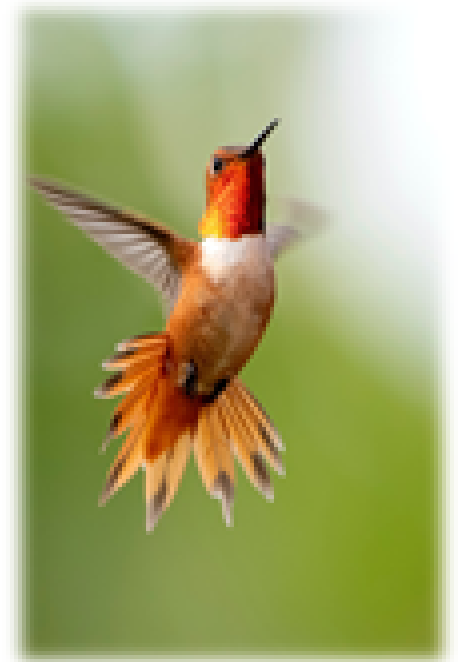
Sympathetic – Controls above the diaphragm. Motivates movement , heart rate, circulation **escape, attack**

Ventral- Connection, engagement, **safety**, curiosity, possibility, breathing, heart rate, blood pressure, higher brain functions



Awareness = Agency

- It takes courage to deeply **inquire into our suffering**
- By making a practice of awareness, new **possibilities emerge**
- When we see what may be possible **agency and healing** is restored to our nervous system



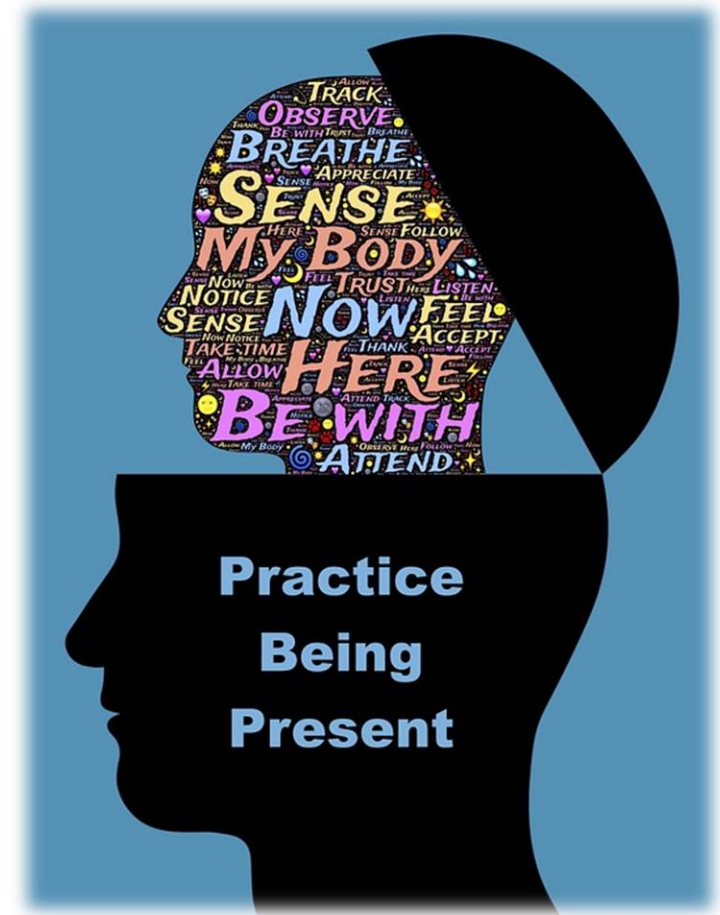
Curiosity Is A Ventral Vagal State

- When our nervous system is **anchored in ventral vagal** we are **curious** and open to learning
- When **either sympathetic or dorsal** is running the show, there is **no room for curiosity** and there is **only shut down** or the urge to **run or fight**



Neuroception

- Experience shapes our nervous system
- We adaptively and subconsciously respond to stimuli without conscious thought - **Neuroception**
- Becoming more aware of these subconscious responses strengthens healthy vagus nerve function



Mapping Our Nervous System

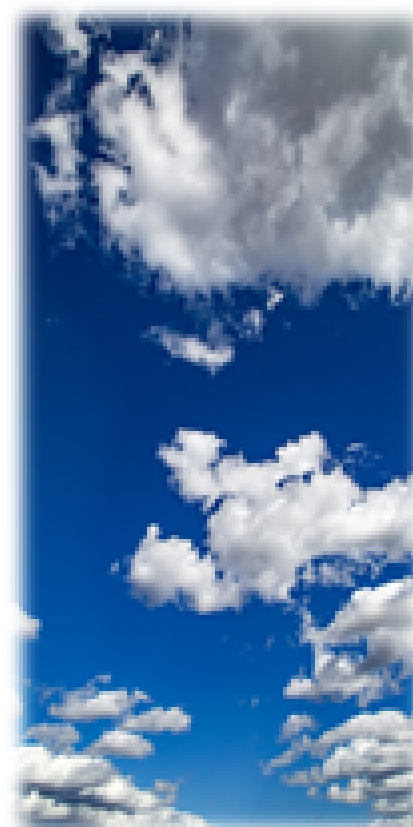
When we “map” our adaptive nervous system responses we begin to gain a perspective on how we **habitually** respond to life’s challenges



When we gain this **awareness** of the ways our nervous system has adapted, we can begin to shape it differently

Safety or Protection

- Our nervous system tells us through **neuroception**, whether we sense danger or safety
- **Sights, sounds, smells** inform our adaptive nervous system
- ***Safety is defined by feeling safe, not by the removal of a threat***



Neuroshapes

- **Experiences in our lives shape our nervous system in certain ways and we continue to respond in those ways...**
- **Until we bring conscious awareness to our nervous system responses**



Co- Regulation

- When we are anchored in **ventral vagal** energy we can connect and help others feel calm, relaxed and most of all **safe = Co-Regulation**
- *And when we co-regulate, we also feel calm, relaxed and safe*



The Vagal Break

- Inhalation speeds up the heart rate and engages the sympathetic nervous system
- **Exhaling longer** than inhaling helps the parasympathetic nervous system engage
- ***Singing, sighing, humming, savoring, celebrating help to engage the vagal break***



Glimmers

- “Glimmers” refers to small moments when our biology is in a place of connection or regulation, which cues our nervous system to feel safe or calm
- We notice these moments when we are anchored in ventral vagal
- ***We can miss these moments but when we make a habit to notice them, we increase our vagal tone***



Vagal Tone

- Nervous systems can become rigid from following the same ways of relating to the world
- When we try new things to strengthen nervous system flexibility and resilience, we can increase vagal tone



What Enlivens You?

- What makes you feel alive, calm, able to get things done, while staying connected?
- These things are resilience anchors, bringing in renewed ventral energy
- Bring your own colors, names and images to soothe and strengthen vagal tone



Savoring and Celebrating

- When we see, smell, taste, feel something beautiful, good, sweet...
- And we savor and celebrate what we are noticing...
- We lock it into our nervous system...
- And that increases vagal tone



Nervous System Reshaping

- Continued awareness (not vigilance) vagal toning, nurturing connection and support...
- Reshapes our nervous system over time...
- We notice ourselves noticing ourselves and that brings a spark of healing ventral energy



Regulated or Dysregulated?

- How do I know when I am feeling stable, regulated, at ease, safe?
- What is the feeling in my body? What are my thoughts?
- Are there some times, places I often feel this way?



I Might Not Be There...Yet

- When we notice impatience or self criticism in ourselves or others
- We can recognize this as a protection state
- And we can remember the word “Yet” to help bring us back to connection



Learn, Live, Share and Thank You!

Resources to continue learning about Polyvagal Theory and to take care of your awesome selves:

- Anchored – Deb Dana
- Polyvagal Theory in Therapy – Deb Dana
- Polyvagal Card Deck – Deb Dana
- Burnout – Emily and Amelia Nagoski
- Deb Dana's website
<https://www.rhythmofregulation.com/>