

Ways to befriend your nervous system - Polyvagal Wisdom -

Workbook created by the “Science of Safety” team within the
small scale Erasmus+ Programme partnership project
(2022-2-HU01-KA210-ADU-000098600)

initially used and tested at COURSE 02
8-17 OCT. 2023. Hungary (Somogyvámos)



inspired by the work of Deb Dana
www.rhythmofregulation.com

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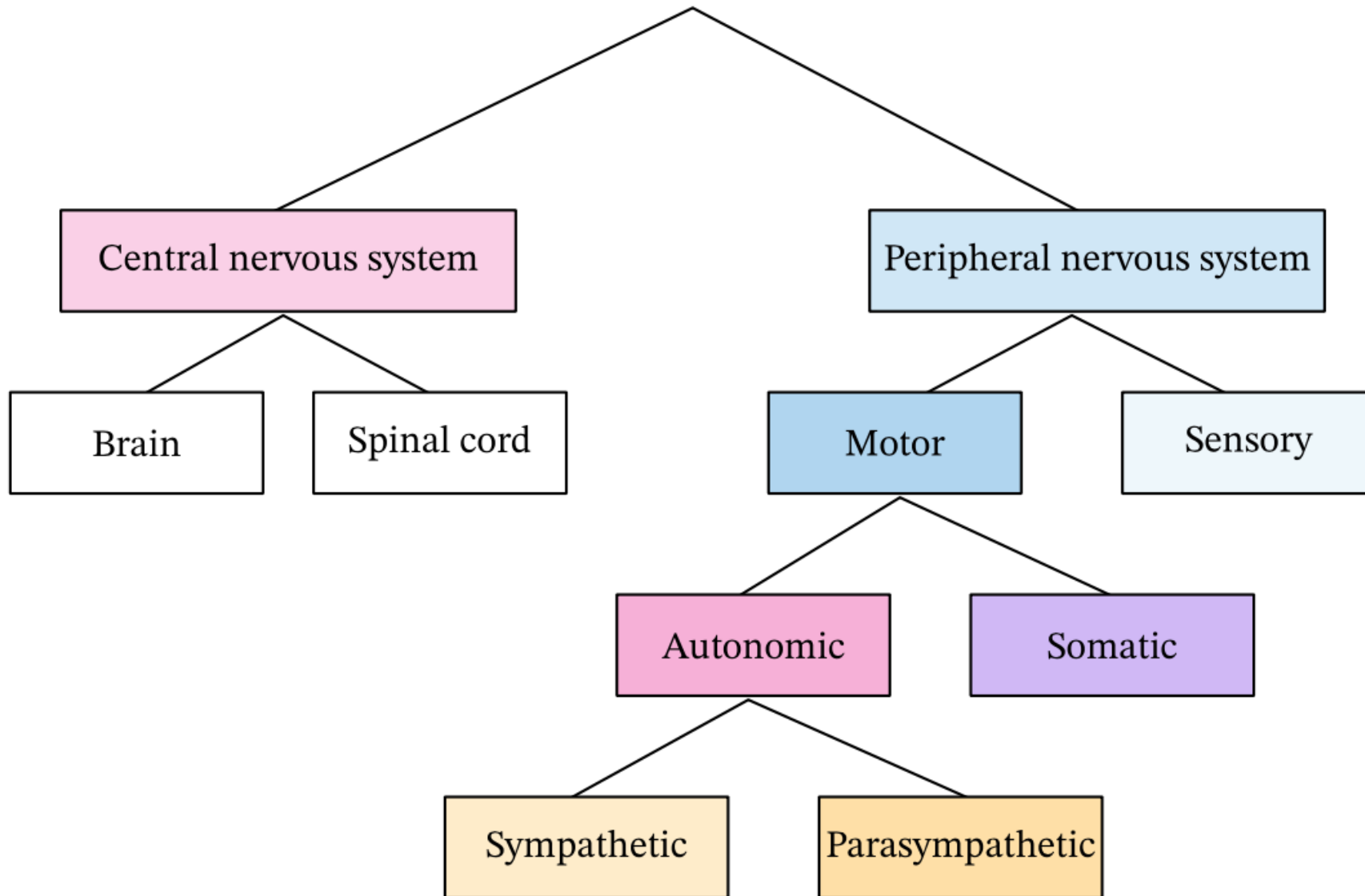
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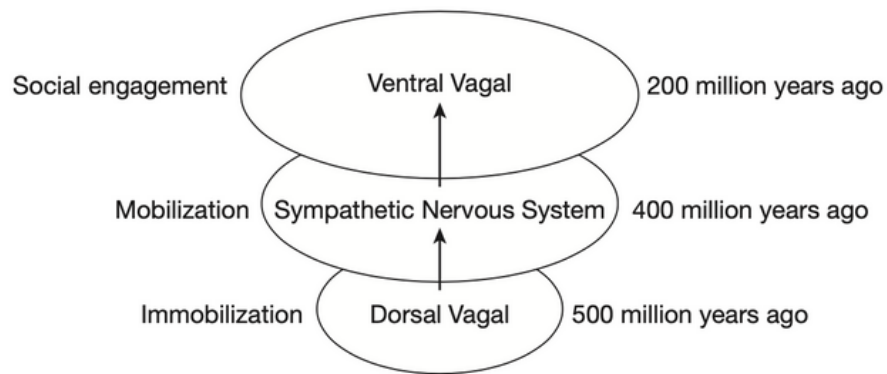
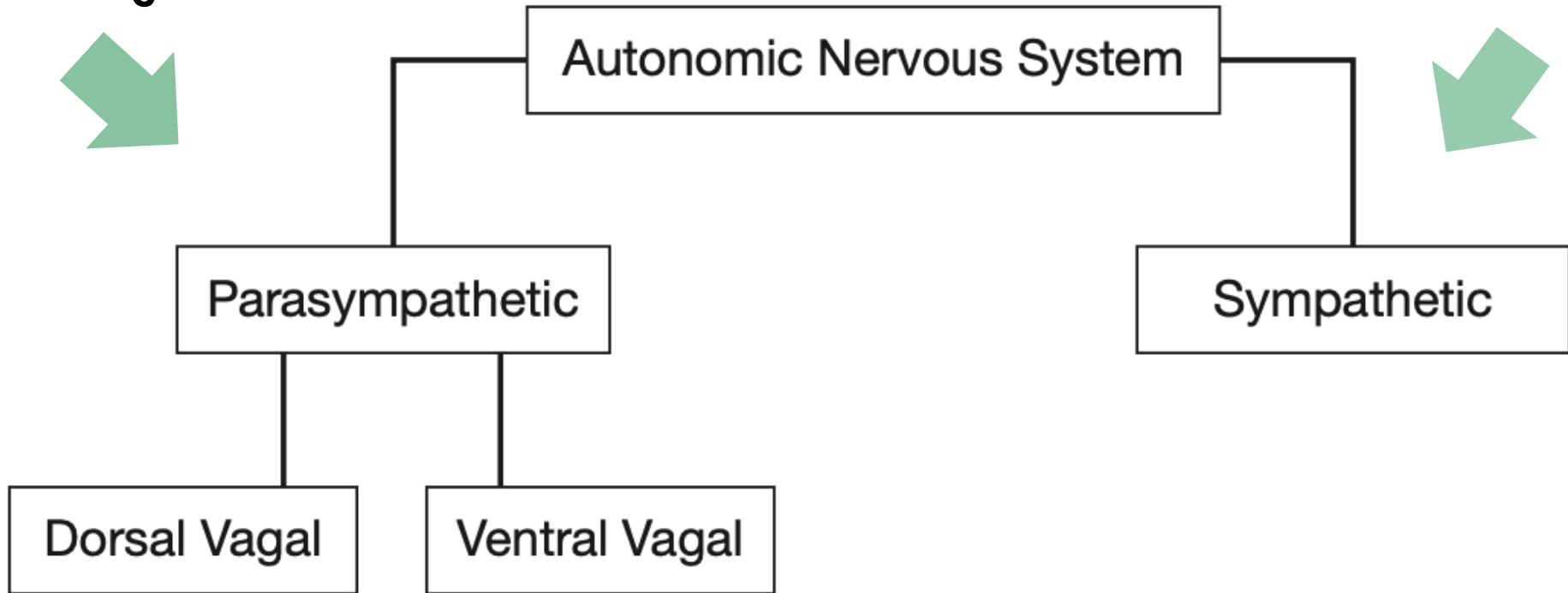
The Human Nervous System



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**relaxation
down regulation**

**activation
up regulation**



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3 organising principles of Polyvagal theory

Co - Regulation

a biological imperative

Neuroception

detection without awareness

Hierarchy

3 predictable pathways of response

Ventral

Sympathetic

Dorsal



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Social Engagement

The Ventral Vagal System & Special Visceral Efferent Pathways



Play

HYBRID: Ventral Vagal & Sympathetic



Intimacy

HYBRID: Ventral Vagal & Dorsal Vagal



Fight

The Sympathetic Nervous System



Flight

The Sympathetic Nervous System



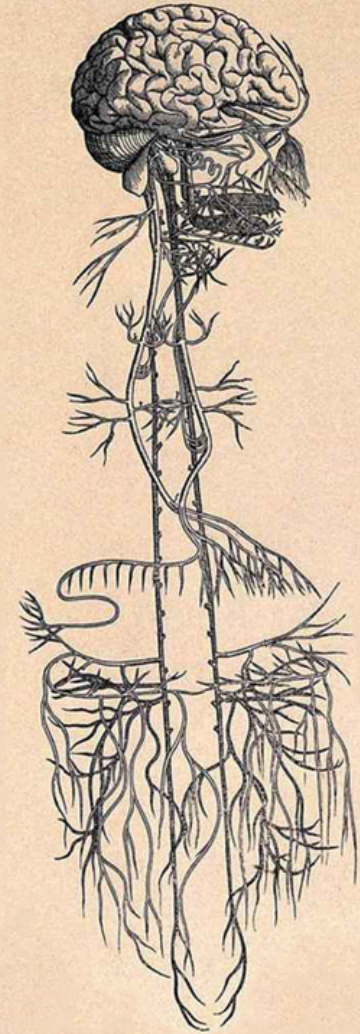
Freeze

HYBRID: Sympathetic & Dorsal Vagal



Shutdown

The Dorsal Vagal System

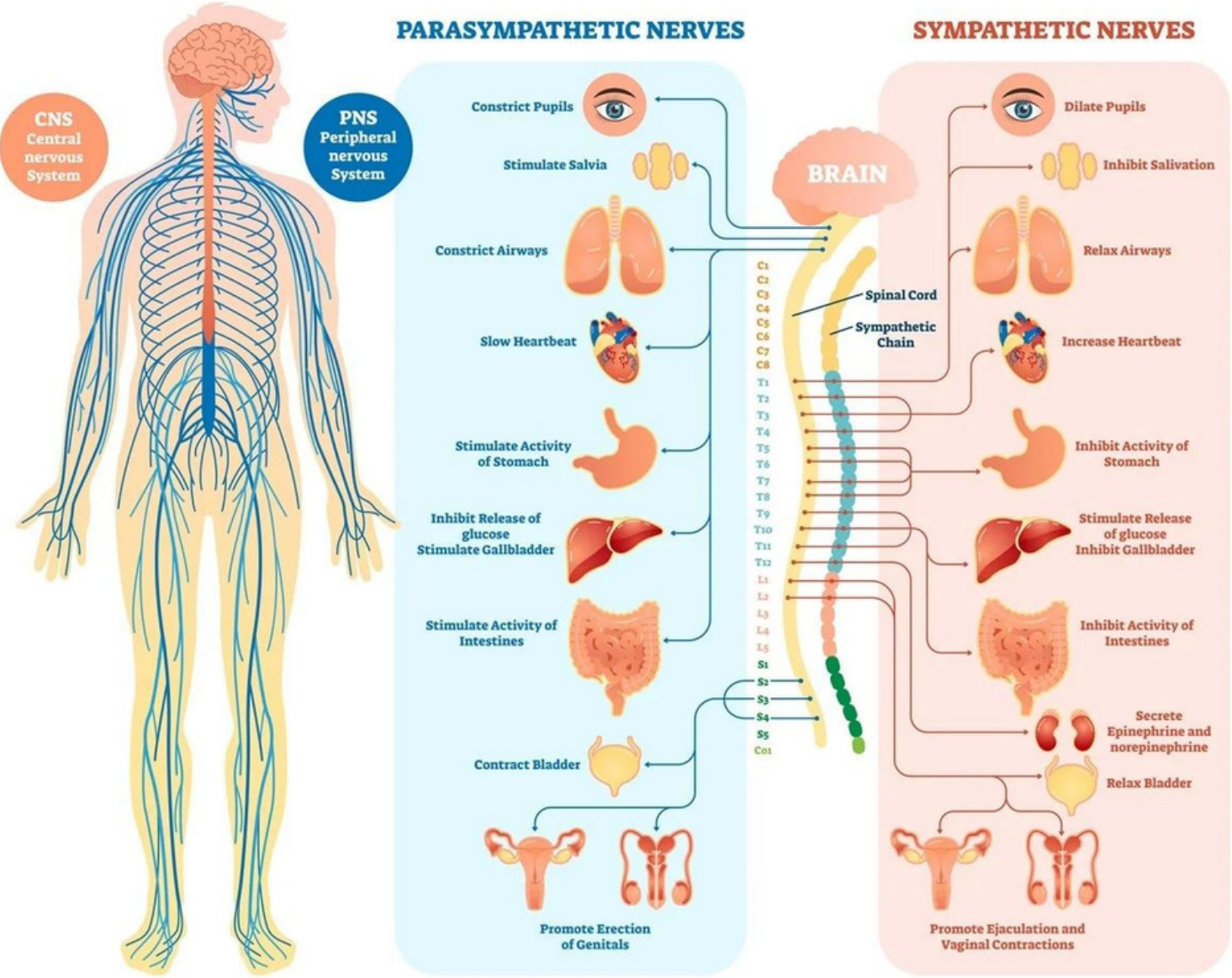


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HUMAN NERVOUS SYSTEM



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ANS in Normal Function

SOCIAL

Love
Language
Sex – Afferglow
Maternal Bonding
Social Organization
Breath • Prosody • Vocalization
Interaction & Reciprocal Play
Contact & Communication

SYMPATHETIC

Mobilization for
Daily Challenges
Recreational Vocalization
Excitement & Muscular Activity
Sex – Climax
Daytime Alertness
& Metabolism

PARASYMPATHETIC

Rest & Rebuild
Meditative States
Sex – Arousal
Sleep (4 stages)
Baseline Metabolism
(Heart • Breath • Digestion)



Add your own personal examples

Hypoarousal

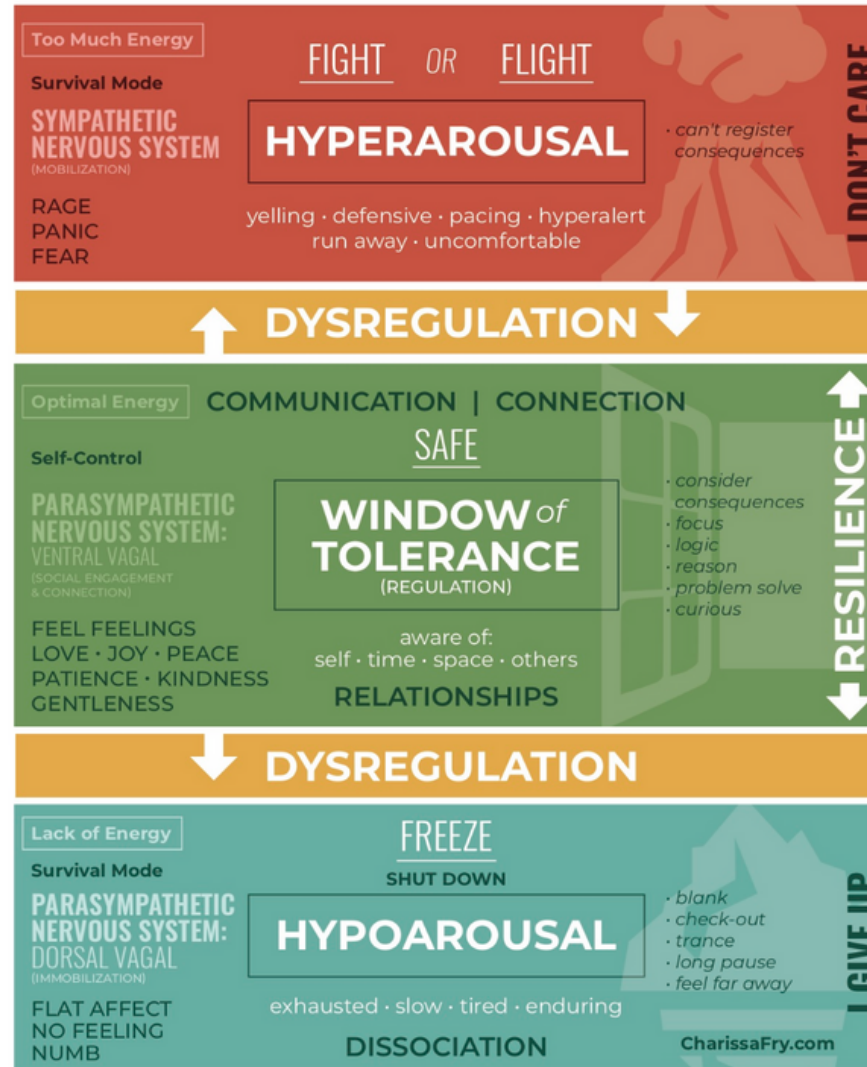
What you see

Five horizontal lines for notes, each preceded by a colored square (orange, brown, yellow, orange, yellow).

What may be underneath

Five horizontal lines for notes, each preceded by a colored square (green, dark green, light green, dark green, light green).

POLYVAGAL THEORY



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Add your own personal examples

Hyperarousal

What you see

Five horizontal lines for notes, each preceded by a colored square (orange, brown, yellow, orange, yellow).

What may be underneath

Five horizontal lines for notes, each preceded by a colored square (green, dark green, light green, dark green, light green).



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Add your own personal examples

Fight / Flight

What you see



What may be underneath



Fight	Flight	Collapsed/ Shut Down
What We See	What We See	What We See
Yelling	Fidgeting	Absent
Blaming	Avoiding	Hiding
Hitting	Unfocused	Isolated
Throwing	Procrastinating	Zoned out
Aggressive	Running away	Unresponsive
Demanding		Day-dreaming
		Not completing work
What is Underneath	What is Underneath	What is Underneath
Stuck	Buzzing	Numb
Worried	Restless	Void
Fear	Preoccupied	Terrified
Alarmed	Over-doing	Despair
Anxious	Over-stimulated	Hopeless
Grasping	Pulled in many directions	Judged
Pressured		Exhausted
Frightened		Overwhelmed
Feeling unloved		Lost/Missing
		Feeling numb

Revelations In Education

Add your own personal examples

Freeze

What you see



What may be underneath



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My Ventral Flavours

My Sympathetic Activation Flavours

My Dorsal Activation Flavours

AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM AS A LADDER

VENTRAL VAGAL ACTIVATION

Attitude: "I am feeling at ease and can manage whatever comes my way. I feel empowered and connected. I see the "big picture" and connect to the world and people in it."

SYMPATHETIC ACTIVATION

Attitude: "I am getting overwhelmed and having hard time keeping up. I feel anxious and irritated. The world seems dangerous, chaotic and unfriendly."

DORSAL VAGAL ACTIVATION

Attitude: "I am buried under a huge load and I cannot get out. I am alone in my despair. The world is empty, dead and dark."

SAFE

SOCIAL

ENGAGED



MOBILIZED

AGITATED

FRANTIC



NUMB

COLLAPSED

SHUT DOWN



how I know I am in Ventral

body

interoception sensations/
voice
energy level

heart

feeling tone
emotional tone

mind

thoughts / self perception
perception of others
perception of the worlds

I am....

he is / she is / they are.....

the world is....

behaviour

how I am / act with myself
how I am / act with others
how I am / act in the world



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VENTRAL ANCHORS

who

what

where

when



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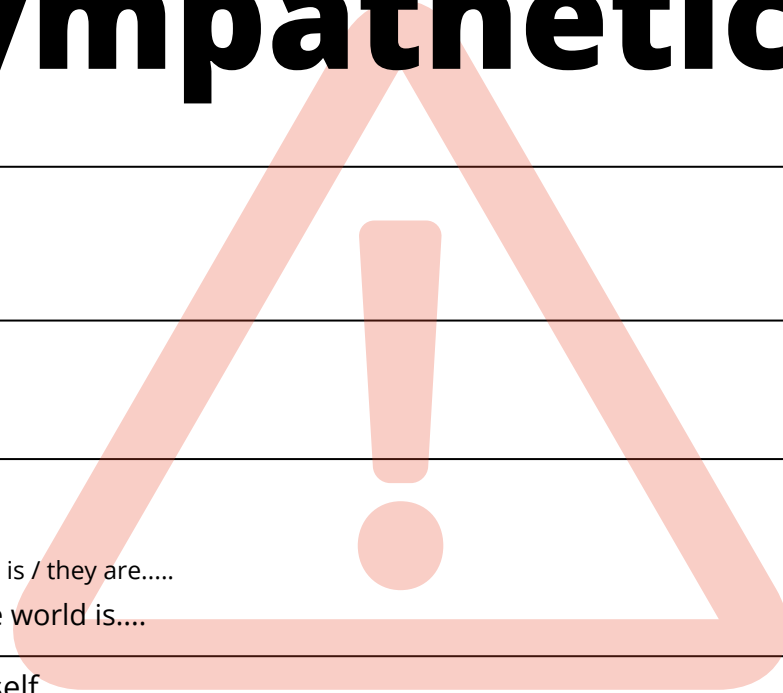
how I know I am in Sympathetic

body interoception
 sensations
 energy level

heart feeling tone
 emotional tone

mind thoughts
 self perception I am....
 perception of others he is / she is / they are.....
 perception of the worlds the world is....

behaviour how I am / act with myself
 how I am / act with others
 how I am / act in the world



how I know I am in Dorsal

body	interoception sensations/ voice energy level
------	--

heart	feeling tone emotional tone
-------	--------------------------------

mind	thoughts / self perception	I am....
	perception of others	he is / she is / they are.....
	perception of the worlds	the world is....

behaviour	how I am / act with myself
	how I am / act with others
	how I am / act in the world



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how I know I am in:



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		VENTRAL	SYMPATHETIC	DORSAL
body	interoception / sensations voice energy level			
heart	feeling tone emotional tone			
mind	thoughts perception of self of the world of others			
behaviour	how I am / act with myself how I am / act with others how I am / act in the world			

W0123-10
FOR YOUR PERSONAL USE ONLY

Ventral

how do I get triggered into sympathetic



SYMPATHETIC

how do I discharge in a safe organised way when in sympathetic



how do I get triggered into dorsal



DORSAL

how do I mobilise from dorsal



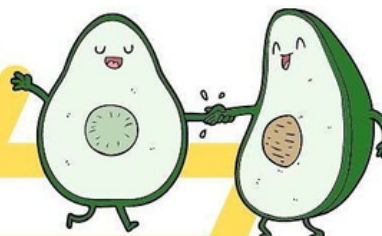
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created
by Deb
Dana

Polyvagal Ladder

Things I can do with
OTHERS: to stay in
Ventral Vagal.

Connect + Co-
regulate, hiking +
sunlight, yoga,
singing, barbecues
with safe people,
swim, work with me
on your selfhealing.



Ventral Vagal
Parasympathetic
Safe + Social

Your Personal Connection Plan for Ventral
Who, where, when

Empty box for personal connection plan for Ventral Vagal.

Your Personal Connection Plan for Sympathetic
Who, where, when

Empty box for personal connection plan for Sympathetic.

Your Personal Connection Plan for Dorsal
Who, where, when

Empty box for personal connection plan for Dorsal Vagal.

Sympathetic
Mobilized
Fight or Flight

What can I do with **another** to move
out of Sympathetic?

Identify and
verbalize to
another that my
nervous system is
dysregulated. Ask
a friend to breathe
with me.

How to enlist help of
others while in Dorsal
Vagal.

Phone a safe contact, therapist, coach or
medical facility and ask for help. Ask a safe
friend/family member for help.

Dorsal Vagal
Immobilized
Collapsed

parasympathetic



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What Movement Medicine
Dance practices are good for Ventral Connection

Empty box for movement medicine practices for Ventral Connection.

What Movement Medicine
Dance practices are good for Sympathetic Activation

Empty box for movement medicine practices for Sympathetic Activation.

What Movement Medicine
Dance practices are good for Dorsal

Empty box for movement medicine practices for Dorsal.



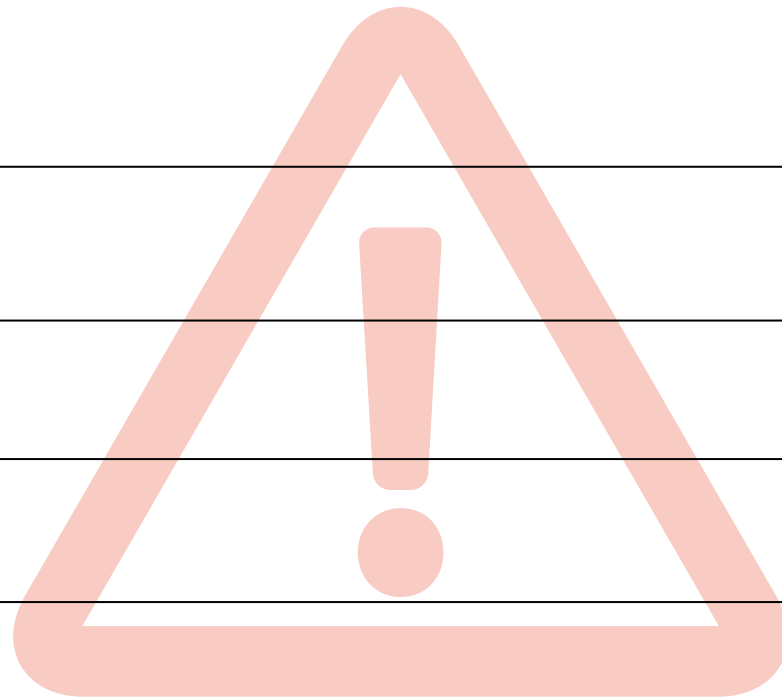
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**how do I get
triggered into
sympathetic**



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personal triggers to sympathetic



who

what

where

when



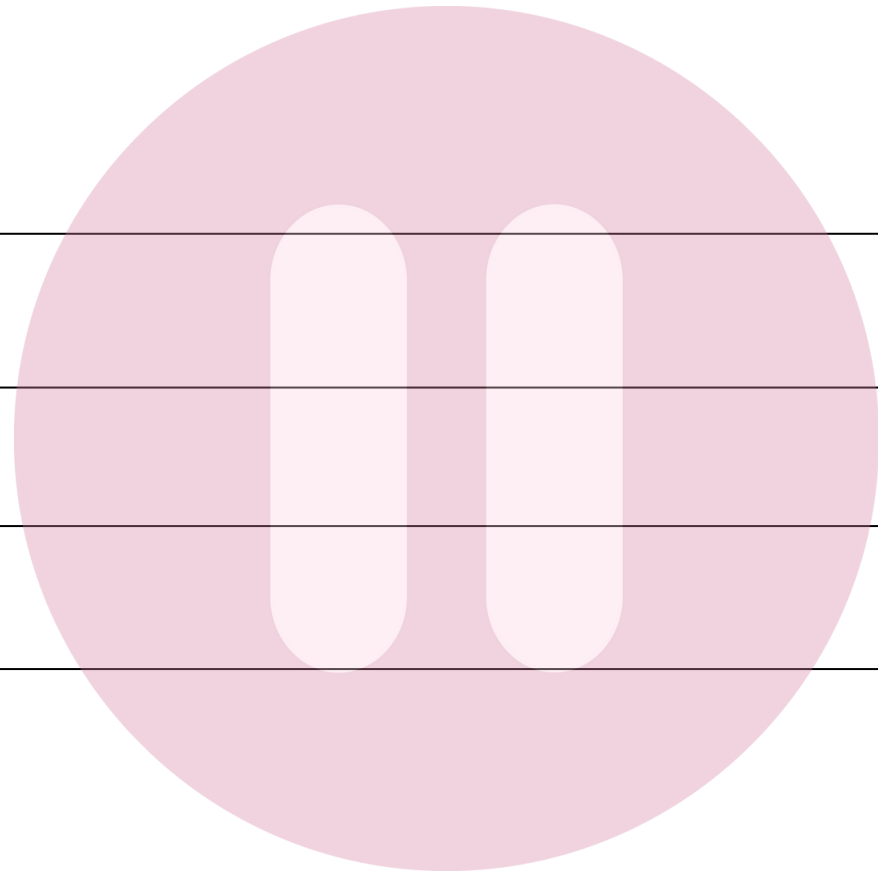
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**how do I get
triggered into
dorsal**



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personal triggers to dorsal



who

what

where

when



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DORSAL

how do I mobilise from dorsal



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how I mobilise



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SYMPATHETIC

**how do I discharge
in a safe organised way
when in sympathetic**



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my ways of safe discharge



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VENTRAL

**ways I deepen and
savour ventral states**



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personal glimmers

body interoception sensations/
voice
energy level

heart feeling tone
emotional tone

mind thoughts / self perception I am....
perception of others he is / she is / they are.....
perception of the worlds the world is....

behaviour how I am / act with myself
how I am / act with others
how I am / act in the world



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my ways to deepen ventral states



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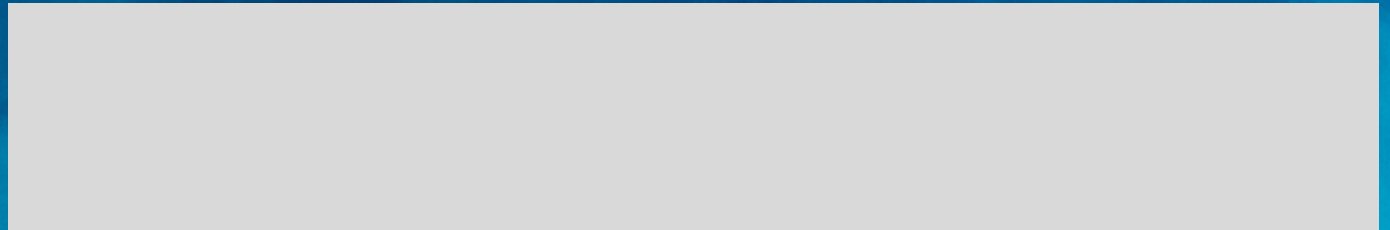
TRIGGERS AND GLIMMERS



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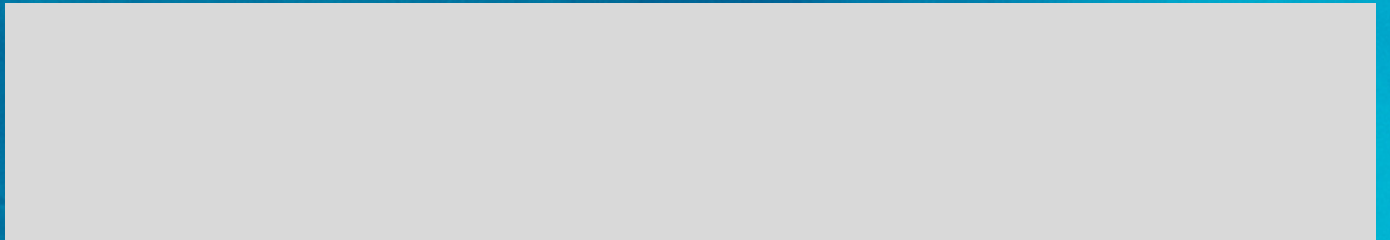
VENTRAL

SAFE, CONNECTED
SOCIAL



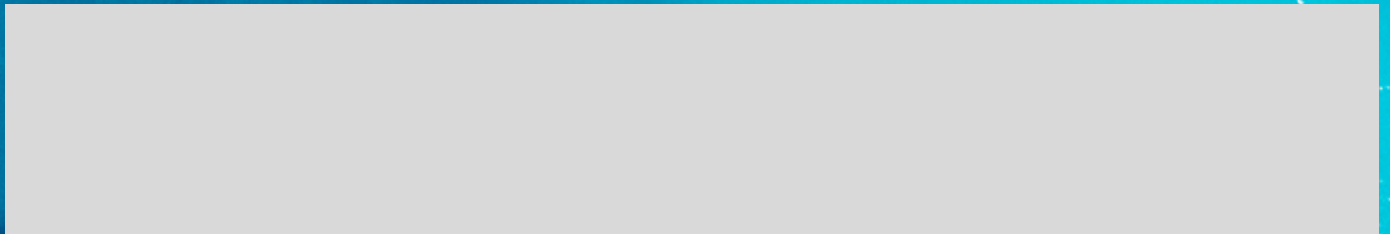
SYMPATHETIC

MOBILISED
FIGHT / FLIGHT



DORSAL

IMMOBILISED
COLLAPSED



BLENDED STATES



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THE MEDICINE OF THE ELEMENTS

Develop the dynamic medicine and teachings of the elements. The four elements are manifestations of the divine and we are made from them. Dancing them is a way to connect deeply to our deepest nature, to nature around us and to the nature of existence. The elements and their guardians are guides, teachers and allies. We dance the elements as support and gateways into sacred space and with the support of the archetypal elements we co-create prayer space for dreaming and healing.

We include an alter representing each element in the four directions.

Play, Fun, Creativity
in safe connection



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who

what

VENTRAL

where



when

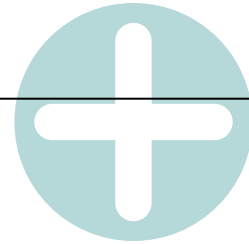
SYMPATHETIC

Play, Fun, Creativity
in safe connection

who

VENTRAL

what



where

SYMPATHETIC

when



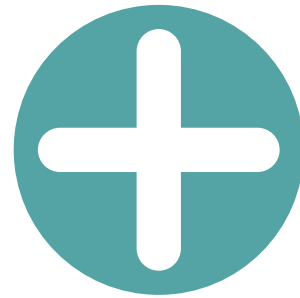
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deep relaxation in safe connection

who

VENTRAL

what



where

DORSAL

when



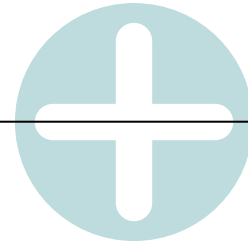
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deep relaxation and rest in safe connection

who

VENTRAL

what



where

DORSAL

when

Somatic Nature with David Mooney
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