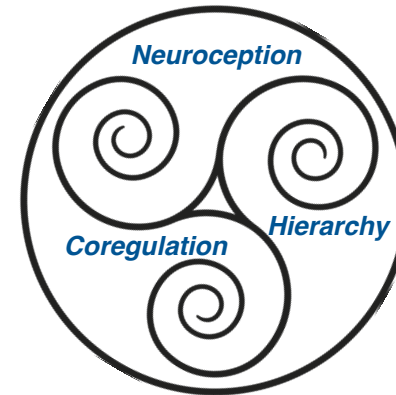


## Polyvagal Skills to Deepen Your Practice



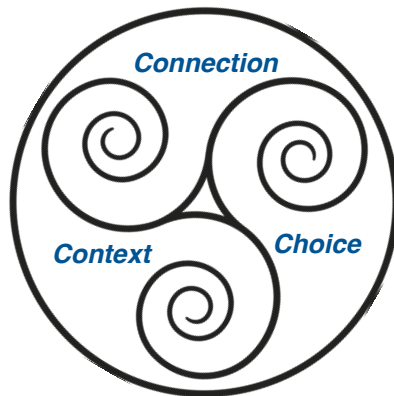
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[rhythmofregulation.com](http://rhythmofregulation.com)

## Three Organizing Principles



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## Three Essential Elements



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## From Survival to Regulation

Clients come to treatment in response to activated survival states. They suffer, and the people around them suffer, when they are pulled into sympathetic and dorsal and can't find the way back to the safety of ventral.

We start with mapping survival states to bring awareness to patterns of protection and to help clients understand the ways sympathetic and dorsal survival energy acts in service of their safety.

Then we add in understanding the everyday, regulating responsibilities of the three states. When clients can come to ventral and stay there for a bit, then they can begin to get to know the qualities of their regulated system.

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## Make the Move from Survival to Regulation

Introduce the concept of the regulated system when your client has had enough experiences of ventral that they can compare and contrast.

Too soon and it will feel unknown and unreachable.

Too late and it will feel like an afterthought and send a message that only survival states are important.

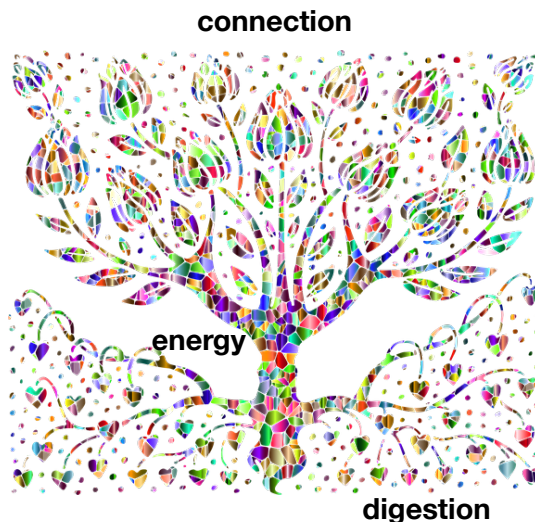
Add an understanding of the everyday, regulating responsibilities of the three states and help your clients get to know the qualities of their regulated system.

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Your deepest presence is in every small contracting and expanding, the two as beautifully balanced and coordinated as birds' wings. Rumi

## Exploring the System in Regulation



## The Regulated System Map

When ventral is overseeing the system, the everyday regulating and resourcing qualities of sympathetic and dorsal emerge. The system finds its way to healthy homeostasis and we feel the physical and psychological benefits of a system in balance.

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## The Story of Your Regulated System



When you think about your autonomic nervous system and the ways it works in its regulated state...

What are the details that are important to you?

What do you love about the way it works?

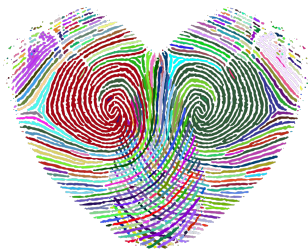
When you take a moment to listen, what does your regulated system want you to know?

What do you want to say in return?

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## Layers of States



There is always a mix of ventral, sympathetic, and dorsal energies moving in our system.

Tune in to your inner world and notice which state is most active and alive in your system? How do you recognize that?

Look beyond that state and find the state that is next.

Finally look to the state that is least active.

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*The nervous system longs to be in ventral regulation  
and inherently knows how to get there...*

## Inviting a New Pattern

If I stopped\_\_\_\_\_ then?

First find the worry. If you stepped out of the pattern, what does your nervous system believe worse would happen? (sympathetic or dorsal) What is it protecting you from?

Then find the hope. What might be possible? (ventral) Titrate the question until it's within the degree of challenge your nervous system can tolerate.

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## Re-Story with Words

1. Write a sentence that illustrates a belief about protection or connection.
2. Change the sentence in some small way by replacing a word, taking a word out, or adding a word in. For a belief about protection, explore changes that shift the belief in the direction of connection. (For example, "Relationships are dangerous, and I'm better off on my own," could be rewritten as "*Some* relationships are dangerous, and *sometimes* I'm better off on my own.") For a belief about connection, explore changes that move the belief into a deeper sense of connection. (For example, "I'm anchored in my state of safety and connection" might become "I'm *firmly* anchored in my state of safety and connection.")
3. Reflect on what happens to your state and your story with each small change.

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## Re-Story with Image

1. Connect with a state of protection or connection. Create an image to represent the state. Listen to the story the image is showing you.
2. Change the image by adding or taking away one small element. Stop and see what happens with your experience and story.
3. Repeat the process until you feel you have reached the point where you have stretched enough and any more would take you into stress.
4. Rest here in the new image and listen to the new story.

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## Resourcing or Dysregulating

Sometimes we're nourished through imagining an action, but a sympathetic flight or dorsal vagal immobilization response takes over when we think about our private, internal experience becoming a visible action.

Imagining action can support the ability to feel safe enough to then enact the action.

The experience of "being a mover" brings new information that can be integrated into the story of who we are.

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## Moving from Stuck to Unstuck

1. Create a movement that represent your sense of being stuck. Enter into the pattern. What feelings emerge? What is the story?
2. Change the movement in a small way. What happens? Play with changing the movement until you feel a shift into being unstuck.
3. Go back and forth between the two movements and feel your ability to get unstuck.

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## The Power of Continuums: Moving Out of All of Nothing

When we see both ends of something, we can see what is in between and feel the nuance of change. We see more than a point in time. We see the different flavors within a state and can track the steps that lead us to moving between states.

Peter, L. J., Schindler, S., Sander, C., Schmidt, S., Muehlan, H., McLaren, T., Tomczyk, S., Speerforck, S., & Schomerus, G. (2021). Continuum beliefs and mental illness stigma: a systematic review and meta-analysis of correlation and intervention studies. *Psychological medicine*, 51(5), 716–726. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291721000854>

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## Find the Flavors of a State

Draw a line (let your nervous system show you the shape).

Name the point where you first “dip a toe” in the state.

Name the point where you are fully immersed in the state.

Travel from one end to the other naming the nuance of change along the way.

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## Lonely...Solitude...Social...Too Social...

We are inherently social and also need solitude

Social and solitude are experiences of safety

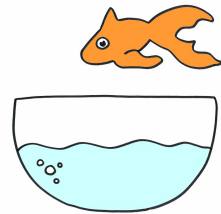
Loneliness activates a survival response

Solitude has been shown to deactivate the sympathetic nervous system and activate calm and ease

Solitude has been shown to result in intimacy, closeness to others, secular and religious connection, creativity

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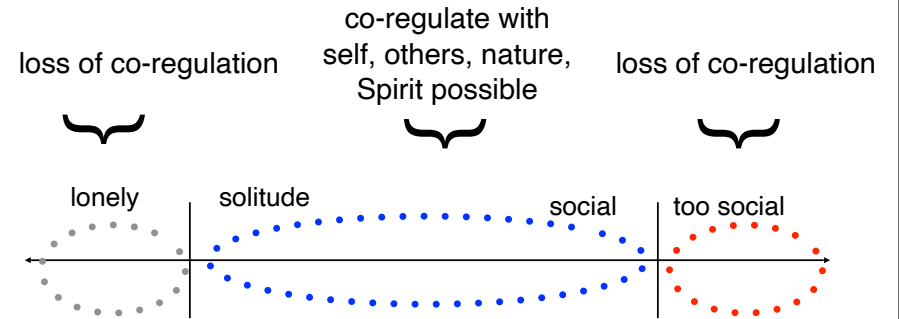
## Moving Between



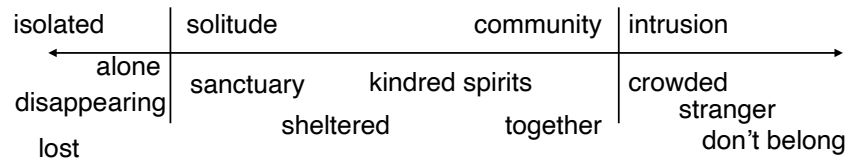
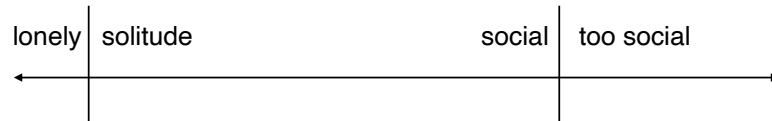
Stavrova, O., & Ren, D. (2021). Is more always better? Examining the nonlinear association of social contact frequency with physical health and longevity. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 12(6), 1058–1070. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550620961589>

Blumstein, D. T., Williams, D. M., Lim, A. N., Kroeger, S., & Martin, J. G. A. (2018). Strong social relationships are associated with decreased longevity in a facultatively social mammal. *Proceedings. Biological sciences*, 285(1871), 20171934. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2017.1934>

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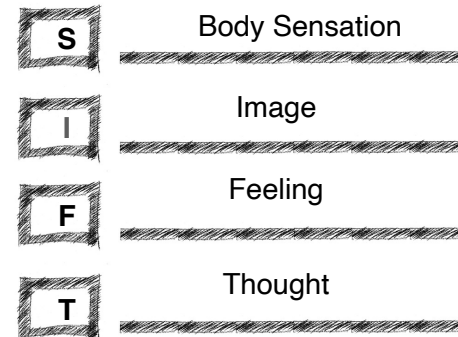


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## SIFTing



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## Within Reach

Choose a practice that feels within reach in the moment. That might be finding and savoring a drop of ventral or feeling deeply anchored in regulation. However we feel the energy of ventral, our bodies and brains take in the nourishment and are open to finding more.



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## Build Your Personal Resource Menu

What does your nervous system say yes to?

Create a variety of options.

Consider the energy needed, path of connection, and ease of engaging in.

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Haeyen S. (2024). A theoretical exploration of polyvagal theory in creative arts and psychomotor therapies for emotion regulation in stress and trauma. *Frontiers in psychology*, 15, 1382007. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1382007>

## Nourishing or Depleting?

Assessing through your autonomic experience

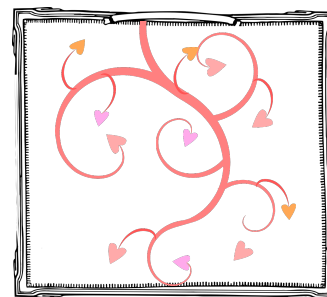
“In this moment”

When I think about \_\_\_\_\_ my nervous system says \_\_\_\_\_.

Honor what you learn.

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## Therapy as an Autonomic Journey

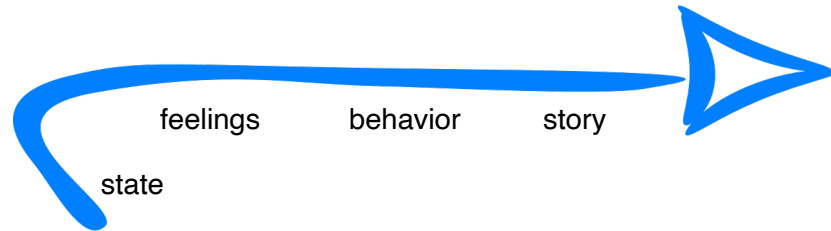


Polyvagal Theory offers a framework for therapy. Within the frame, you travel where the nervous system invites you to explore.

Every session is a journey made safe by taking ventral with you.

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## Entering In...



Push against the tide?  
Go with the flow?

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## The Essential Element of Ventral

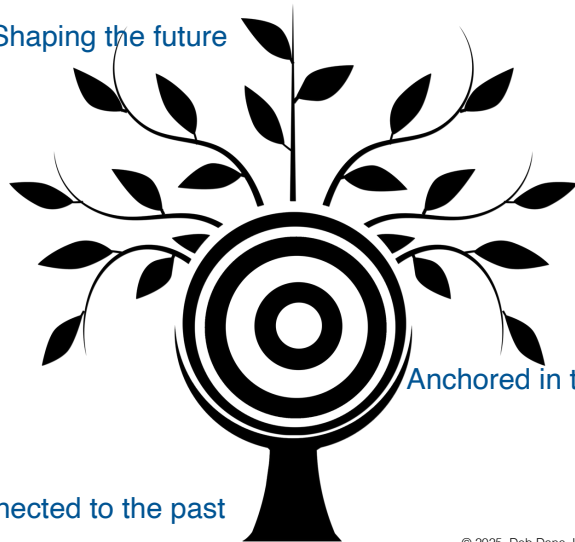
Ventral is the necessary ingredient for change. Without enough ventral active and alive in the system, neuroception is one of danger, survival states activate, and the system is closed to change.

In your work, take ventral with you, return to ventral frequently, and find the flavor of ventral that fits the need of the moment.

Ryland, S., Johnson, L. N., & Bernards, J. C. (2021). Honoring protective responses: Reframing resistance in therapy using polyvagal theory. *Contemporary Family Therapy: An International Journal*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10591-021-09584-8>

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Shaping the future



Anchored in the present

Connected to the past

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