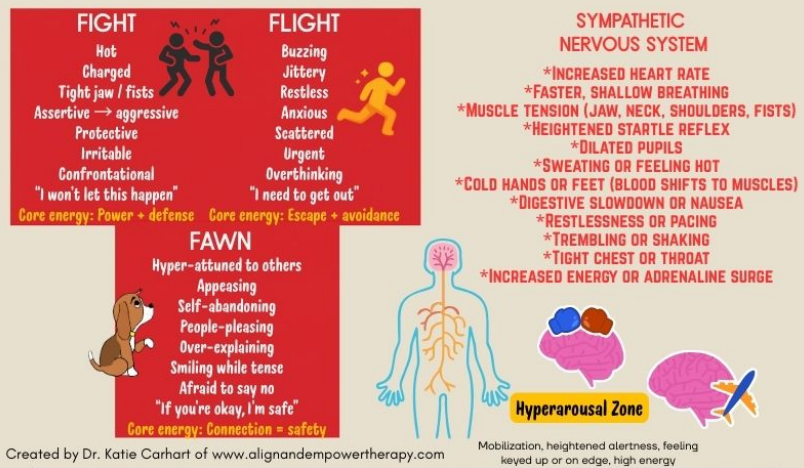


Polyvagal Theory

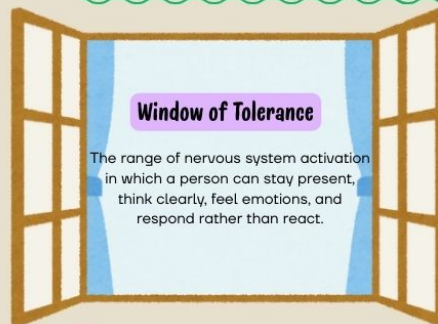
An overview of what happens during nervous system dysregulation and regulation



Created by Dr. Katie Carhart of www.alignandempowertherapy.com

What are your cues that you are starting to push into fight, flight or fawn?

DYSREGULATION ZONE



PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM (VENTRAL VEGAL OR "REST & DIGEST")

PHYSICAL / PHYSIOLOGICAL
SLOWER, STEADY HEART RATE
DEEPER, FULLER BREATHING
RELAXED MUSCLES
WARMTH IN HANDS, FEET, AND CORE
IMPROVED DIGESTION
REGULAR APPETITE CUES
BALANCED ENERGY
CLEAR VOICE TONE AND FACIAL EXPRESSION
GOOD SLEEP AND RECOVERY
IMMUNE SYSTEM SUPPORT



EMOTIONAL RESPONSE

*FEELINGS ARE NOTICEABLE BUT MANAGEABLE
*EMOTIONAL RANGE (NOT NUMB, NOT OVERWHELMED)
*CURIOSITY INSTEAD OF FEAR
*SELF-COMPASSION
*EMOTIONAL REGULATION
*SENSE OF SAFETY OR "OKAY-NESS"

BEHAVIOR

*RESPONDING INSTEAD OF REACTING
*FLEXIBLE THINKING
*ABILITY TO PAUSE AND CHOOSE
*CLEAR COMMUNICATION
*HEALTHY BOUNDARIES
*PROBLEM-SOLVING
*STAYING ENGAGED EVEN WITH STRESS
*CAPACITY FOR REPAIR AFTER CONFLICT

DYSREGULATION ZONE

What are your cues that you are starting to push into freeze?



FREEZE STATE

Hypoarousal Zone

Immobilization, disconnection, feeling numb or "checked out", low energy

EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE
*NUMBNESS OR EMOTIONAL FLATNESS
*HOPELESSNESS OR HELPLESSNESS
*DISCONNECTION FROM SELF OR OTHERS
*SHAME OR SELF-BLAME
*EMPTINESS
*SENSE OF BEING "STUCK" OR FROZEN
*LOW MOTIVATION OR DESIRE



BEHAVIORAL PATTERNS

*WITHDRAWAL OR ISOLATION
*DIFFICULTY INITIATING TASKS
*ENERGY CONSERVING BEHAVIOR (SLEEPING, SCROLLING, ZONING OUT)
*REDUCED COMMUNICATION
*PASSIVITY WITHOUT ENGAGEMENT
*DIFFICULTY MAKING DECISIONS
*STUCK OR IMMOBILE



PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM (DORSAL VEGAL)

PHYSICAL / PHYSIOLOGICAL
*LOW ENERGY OR HEAVINESS IN THE BODY
*SLOWED HEART RATE
*SHALLOW OR VERY SLOW BREATHING
*MUSCLE WEAKNESS OR COLLAPSE
*COLDNESS OR NUMBNESS (ESPECIALLY HANDS, FEET)
*REDUCED DIGESTION AND APPETITE
*FLAT FACIAL EXPRESSION
*DULL OR MONOTONE VOICE
*REDUCED PAIN SENSITIVITY OR "CHECKED-OUT" FEELING
*FATIGUE THAT DOESN'T RESOLVE WITH REST

Polyvagal Theory explains how the nervous system adapts to safety and threat. Regulation is not about eliminating stress responses, but about increasing flexibility and the capacity to return to connection. This infographic is based on Polyvagal Theory developed by Stephen Porges, and further translated into clinical practice by Deb Dana and others.