

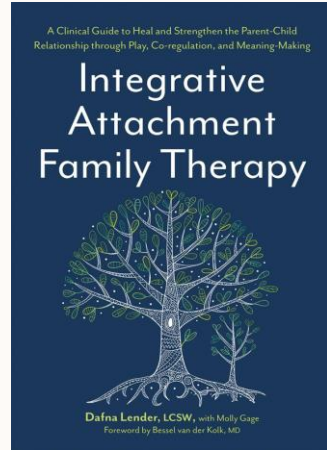
Dafna Lender, LCSW

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Polyvagal Parenting



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MY POLYVAGAL PARENTS



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WHAT IS POLYVAGAL THEORY?



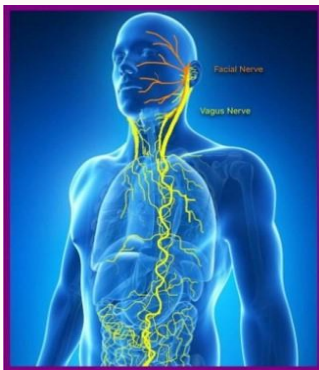
Dr. Porges and Dafna
Oxford, England - September, 2023

- Proposed by Dr. Stephen Porges
- Defines the ways the autonomic nervous system (ANS) reacts to experiences and regulates responses
- Describes the way the ANS takes information and initiates a response to help us navigate ordinary and extra-ordinary challenges
- Outlines a hierarchy of three biological pathways of response, provides a map of the ways we predictably move in and out of engagement, mobilization and collapse

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ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES OF POLYVAGAL THEORY



3 predictable pathways of response

Ventral Vagal
Relaxed

Sympathetic
Mobilized

Dorsal Vagal
Immobilized

- **Co-Regulation:** a biological imperative
- **Neuroception:** detection without awareness

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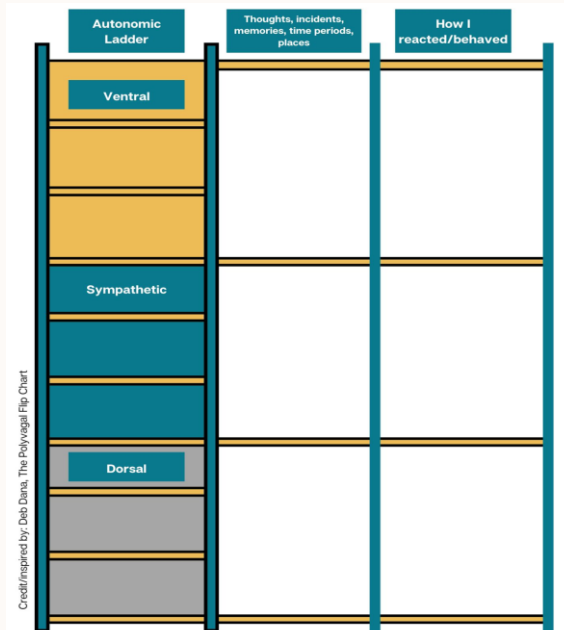
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There is no such thing as an infant, only the parent-infant dyad



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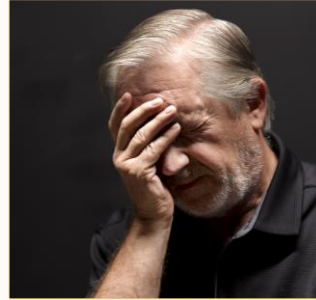


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YOUR TAKE-AWAY

- **When you are beginning to feel any of the following states:**
 - Withdrawn, disconnected, apathetic, wanting to hide, feeling numb/robot, overwhelmed
 - Hot, agitated, racing thoughts, wanting to strike out/yell/curse
- **Become aware of your body sensations:**
 - Tell yourself "I am going into (dorsal) (sympathetic)."
 - This is a natural nervous system response.
 - I am overwhelmed/feeling unsafe.
 - There is nothing wrong with me.
 - Ask yourself: "What do I need to allow myself to move back into ventral?"



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ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES OF POLYVAGAL THEORY

DORSAL

GENERAL:

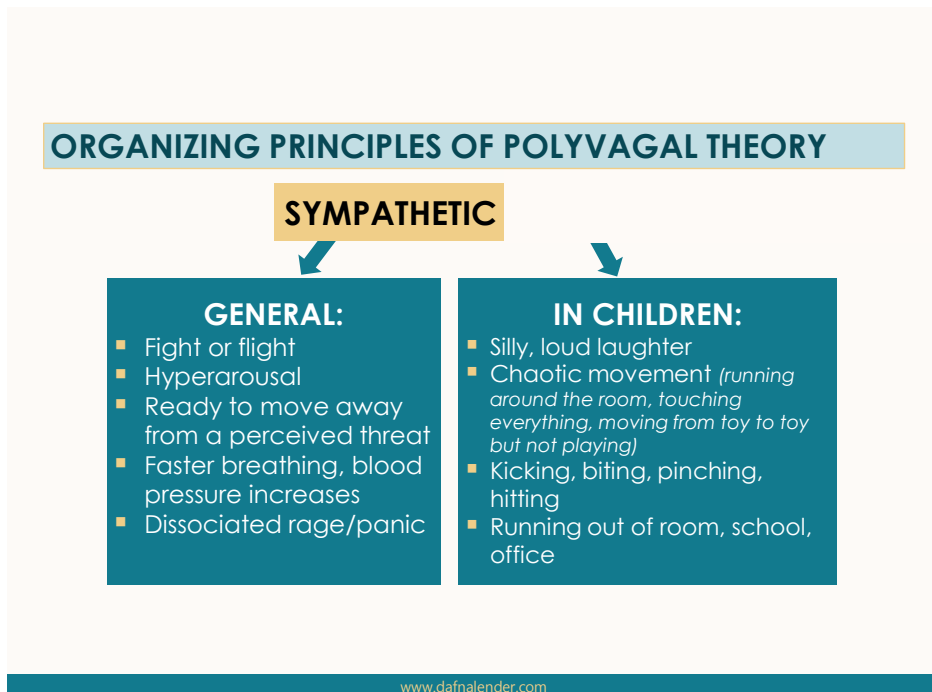
- Immobilization
- Survival State
- Shame, hopelessness, overwhelm
- Hypoarousal
- Dissociated Collapse
- Shut down

IN CHILDREN:

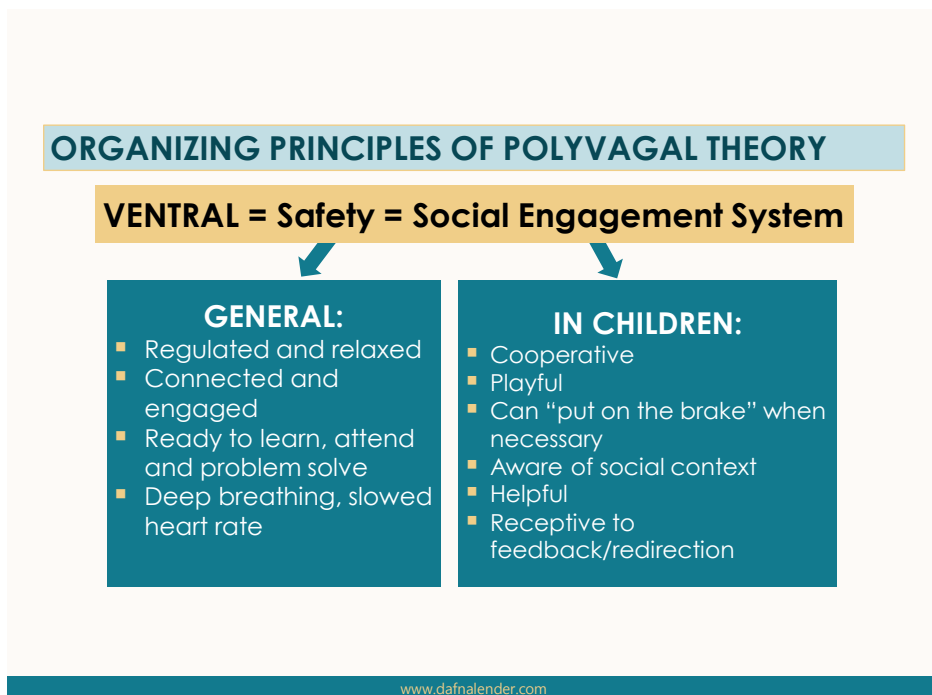
- Avert eye contact
- Hiding behind hair/hood/hat
- Seeming not to hear their parents/authority figures
- Engrossed in phone
- Apathetic
- Depressed
- Uncaring
- Constant Fatigue
- Concentration problems
- Compliance/obedience in a mechanical/robotic way

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VENTRAL = SAFETY = USING OUR SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT SYSTEM

- ✓ Safety is a physiological state regulated by the autonomic nervous system (ANS)
- ✓ Safety is required for optimal social behavior and health/growth
- ✓ “Safety” is not just the removal of features of danger, but requires active presentation of safety features
- ✓ We seek cues in faces, voices and movements of others and form trusting relationships with those who emit cues of safety



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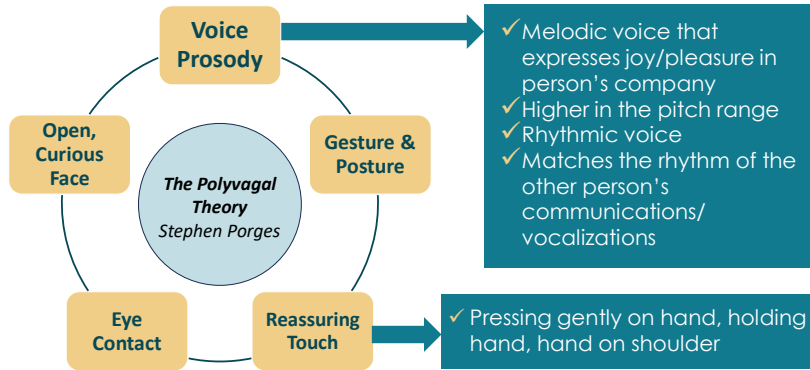
Interactive play is a neural exercise in safety and connection



- Helping the client feel safe
- Exercising the neural regulation of the ANS and SES of the therapist and client together
- Reflecting on that safety with the client
- Developing a personal narrative and new neural expectancies of safety while shifting biobehavioral states
- Helping the client facilitate the child's safety

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VENTRAL-USING YOUR SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT SYSTEM



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Activities to exercise Social Engagement System

- Gesture and posture-mirroring game
- Open, curious face-copy funny faces
- Eye contact-"The eye is the window to the soul"- Look left pupil to left pupil, imagine seeing a flame behind the eyeball of your partner. Imagine the flame is your partner's soul that you can see
- Touch-4 part handshake

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