

Lessons From the Polyvagal Theory and What It Means for YOU and your Canine Partner

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So What is the Polyvagal Theory?

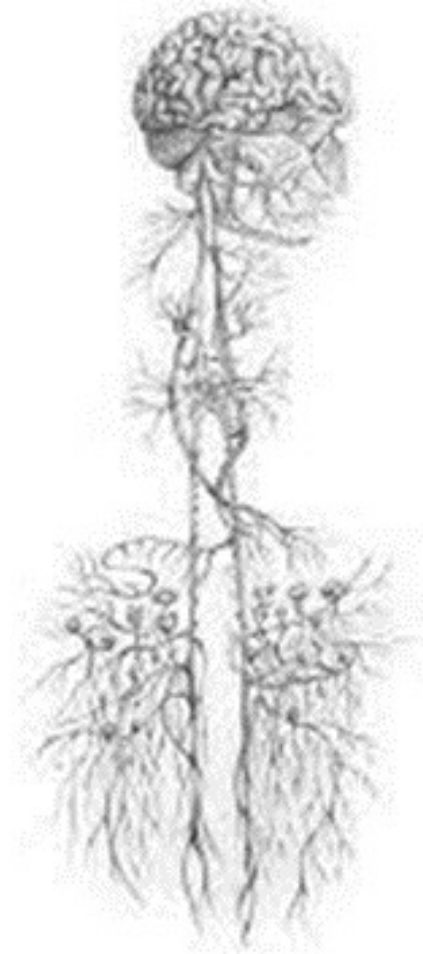
- **Dr. Stephen Porges – originator of Polyvagal Theory**
 - Biological order of response that is active in all mammalian experience
 - We all come into this world hard-wired for connection and on a quest to feel safe in our bodies.
- **The Autonomic Nervous System**
 - Our personal surveillance system, always on guard, always assessing safety and protects us by sensing safety and risk
 - This listening happens at an unconscious level and is out of our conscious control
 - As a meaning-making species, what starts as an experience below our level of awareness, is then driven by the creation of a story that shapes our daily lives.

Three Key Principles of Polyvagal Theory

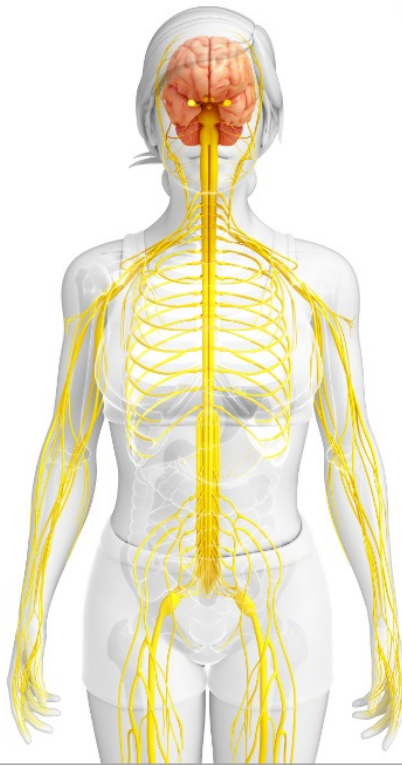
- **Autonomic Nervous System Operates in a Hierarchy of 3 Principle States**
 - Relaxed
 - Mobilized
 - Immobilized
- **Neuroception**
 - Regulation of the ANS occurs through a built-in surveillance system that operate at unconscious level
- **Co-Regulation**
 - Through our social engagement system, naturally and unconsciously, we send signals of safety or danger to others, and calm our reaction to threat while also enabling non-verbal communication, facial expression recognition, vocalizations that signal friendly communication.

The Vagus Nerve – Your Body's Information Superhighway

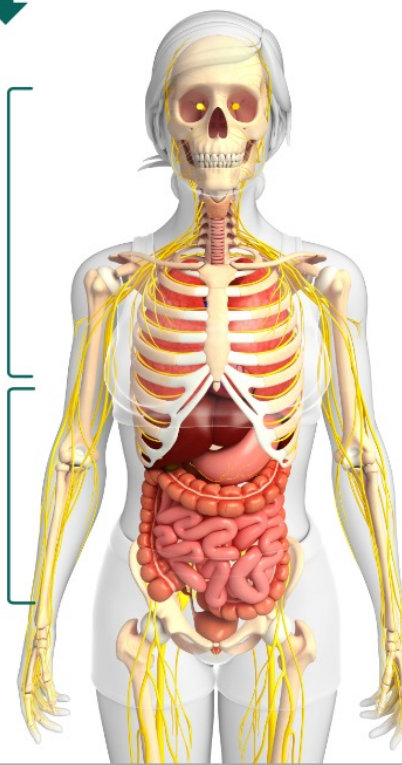
- 80% of the vagus nerve fibers communicate *FROM the BODY* to the brain
- 20% of the vagus nerve fibers communicate *FROM the BRAIN* to the body



AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM (according to *Polyvagal Theory*)



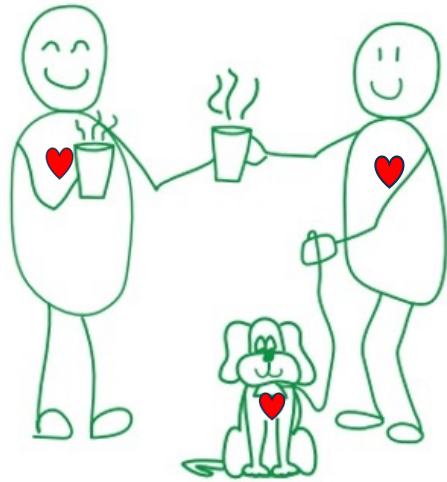
SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM
mobilized, confrontational,
alert, defensive state



VENTRAL (or "SOCIAL") VAGAL SYSTEM
safe, connected, responsive,
compassionate state

DORSAL (or "PRIMITIVE") VAGAL SYSTEM
immobilized, frozen, numb,
disassociated state

Joy, Present, Compassionate,
Mindful, Curious, Grounded



SAFE:

Feeling Safe, open to social
engagement and play
(Parasympathetic Ventral
Vagal System)

“I MAY”

Irritation, Frustration, Anger,
Rage, Worry, Anxiety, Fear, Panic



MOBILIZED:

Mobilized in response to
a perceived threat, ready
to fight or flee
(Sympathetic Nervous
system)

“I CAN” “I SHOULD” “I MUST”

Helplessness, Depression,
Dissociation, Hopelessness, Shut-
down, Shame



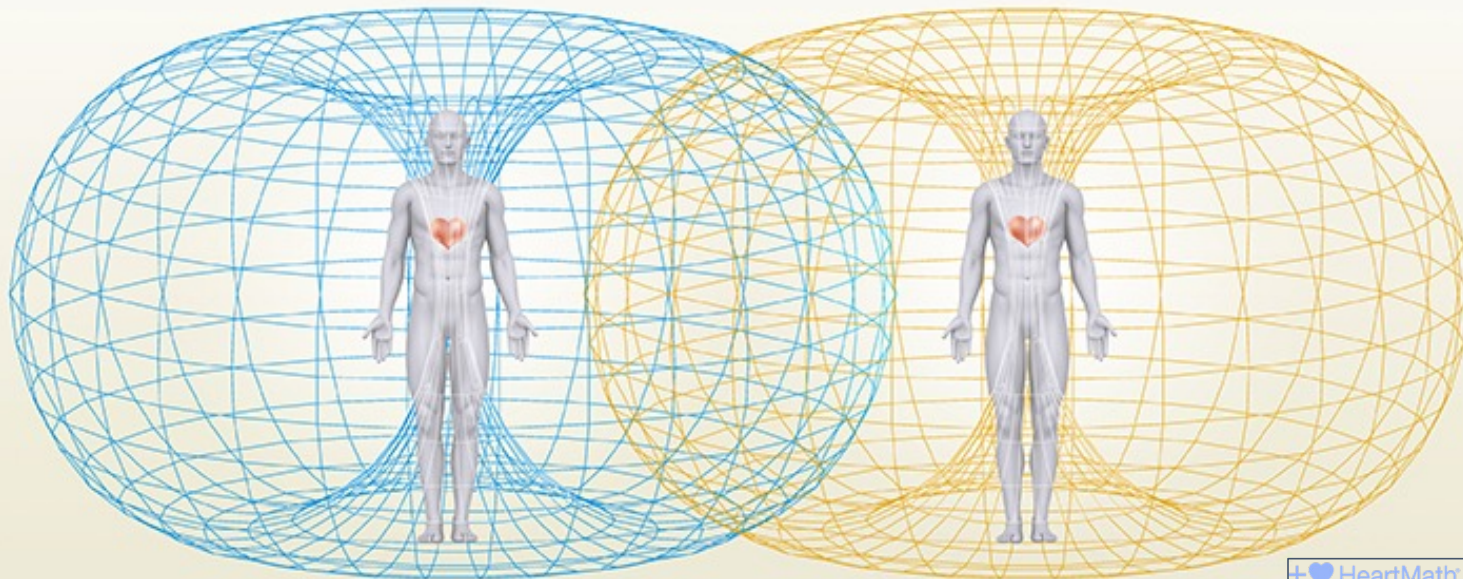
IMMOBILIZED:

Immobilized in response to
an extreme threat, shut-
down and unable to move
(Parasympathetic Dorsal
Vagal System)

“I CAN’T”

Magnetic Field of the Heart

Our thoughts and emotions affect the heart's magnetic field, which energetically affects those in our environment whether or not we are conscious of it.



+♥ HeartMath Institute
A Nonprofit Organization

The human heart radiates an electromagnetic field that spans upwards of 20 feet in diameter creating enough bioelectric energy to drive a truck 20 miles. It manifests in the shape of a taurus.
This taurus energy field is found throughout nature

Space is the Place

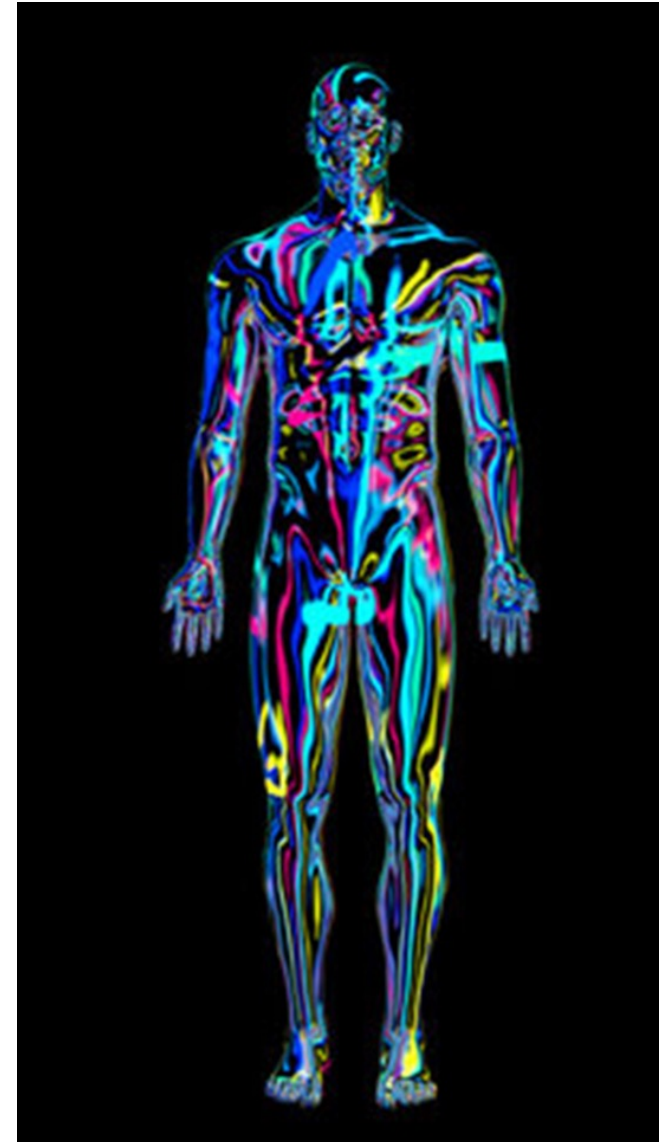
- Proximity Awareness Exercise
- The Space Our Body Needs for Our Mind to be Present

H O P P E

Animal-Assisted
Crisis Response

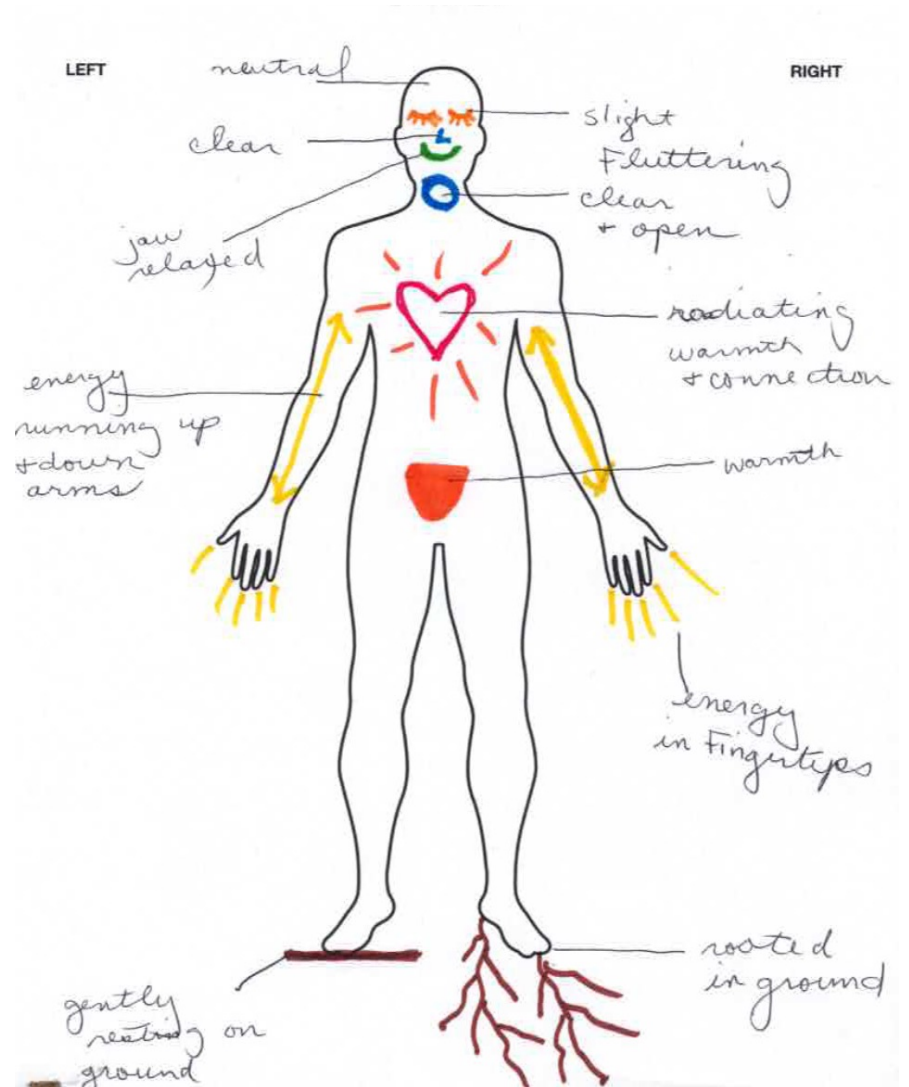
The Body Scan – Or Body Inventory

- An exercise for using your body as a tuner and receiver for information in your environment
- Helps us to open a dialogue and to become more aware of events or situations that trigger our safety/danger response and our activation of the sympathetic nervous system.
- This is an exercise to gain awareness, not a tool for relaxation.



Body Scan/Inventory Information

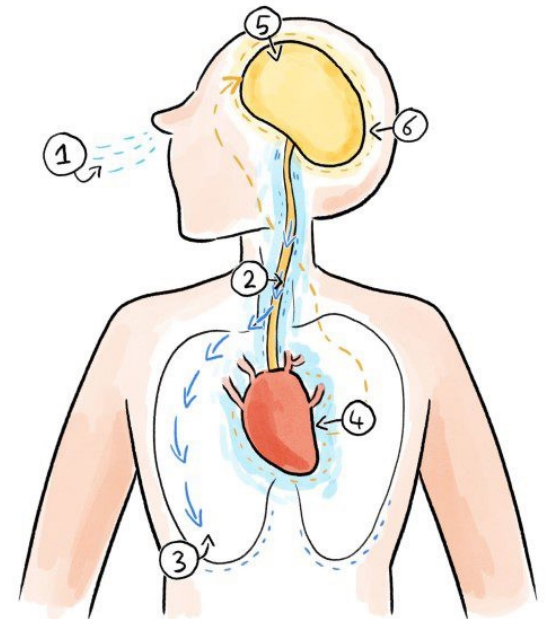
- Information on image is information received through body scan
- Body many times communicates in artistic ways, much like a poet or musician rather than as a scientist.
- There is no right or wrong, just a simple dialogue with your body.
- It is good to make a deal with your body that you will listen now, but you can only take so much information at one time.



What do we do when we are stressed?



Breathing Patterns to Impact our Emotional State



Safe
5:5 ratio

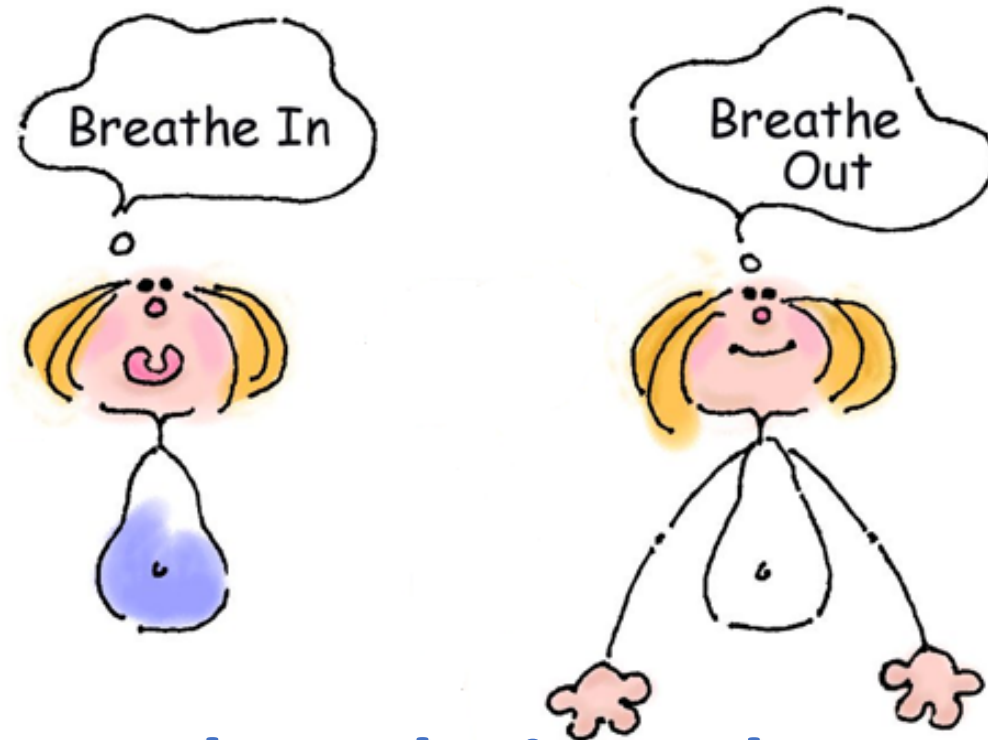


Mobilized
4:6 ratio



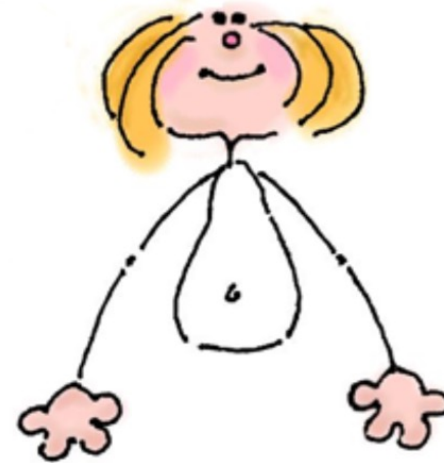
Immobilized
6:4 ratio

Safe and Connected Regulated Breathing



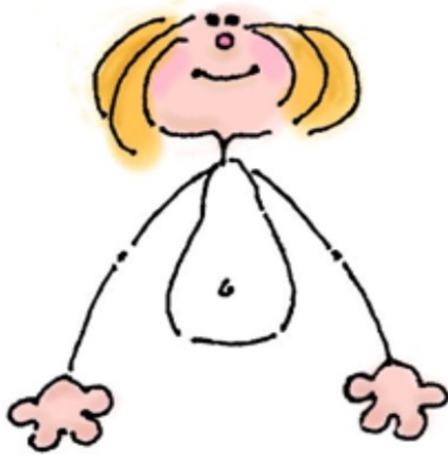
Even breaths in and out
5:5 ratio

Activated Breathing – Mobilized for Protection



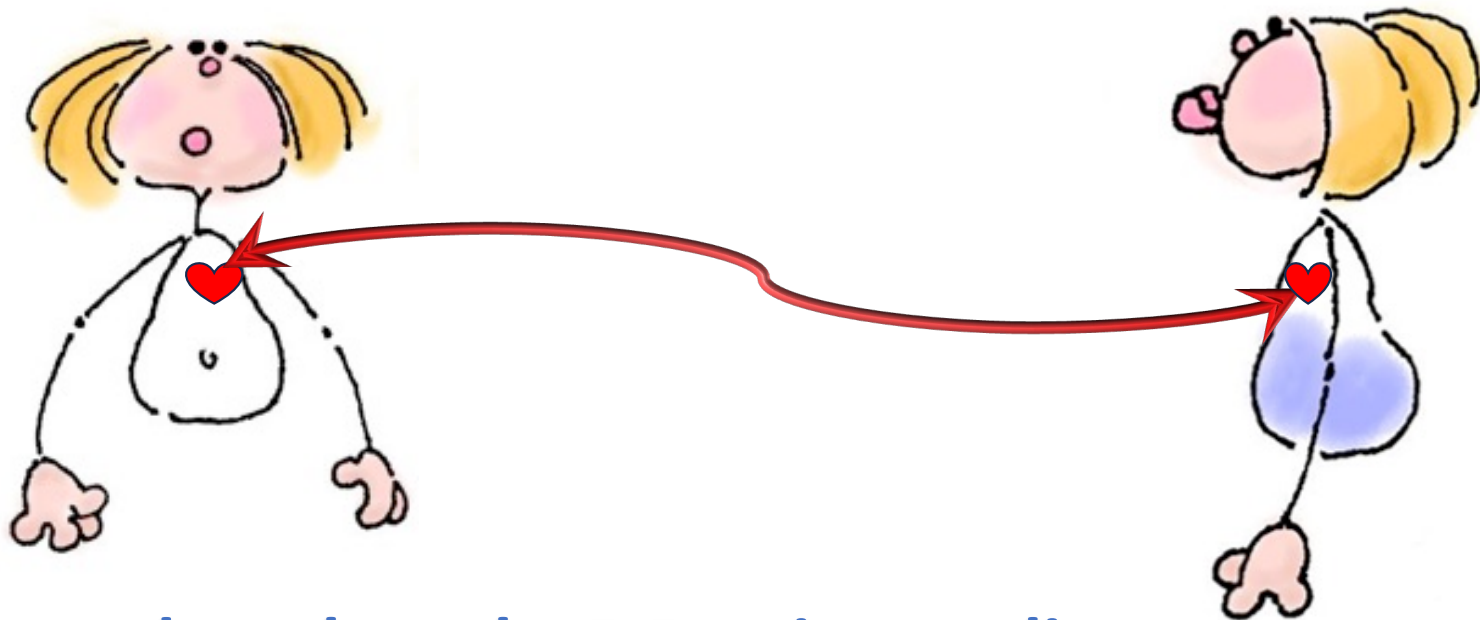
Greater Inhale than Exhale
6:4 ratio

Breathing When Relaxation is Needed



Greater Exhale than Inhale
4:6 ratio

CONNECTED BREATHING FOR COREGULATION



Even in and out breaths 5:5 ratio, sending awareness and loving kindness, heart to heart, *on the outbreath*

