

Contents

[What is Polyvagal Theory?](#)

[Co-Regulation](#)

[Neuroception](#)

[The Autonomic Timeline](#)

[The Autonomic Hierarchy](#)

[Vagal Components of the Parasympathetic Nervous System](#)

[The Sympathetic Nervous System](#)

[The Autonomic Ladder](#)

[Newest Evolutionary Circuit–Ventral Vagal](#)

[The Sympathetic Response](#)

[Earliest Evolutionary Circuit–Dorsal Vagal](#)

[The Social Engagement System](#)

[Blended States](#)

[The Vagal Brake](#)

[Ventral Vagal Oversees The System *All Systems Online*](#)

[Sympathetic Nervous System Takes Over](#)

[Dorsal Vagal System in Charge](#)

[The Autonomic Impact of Trauma](#)

[Stuck in an Autonomic Cycle](#)

Navigating the Autonomic Hierarchy with Flexibility
The Experience of Comparing
Personal Profile Map
Triggers and Glimmers Map
Regulating Resources Map

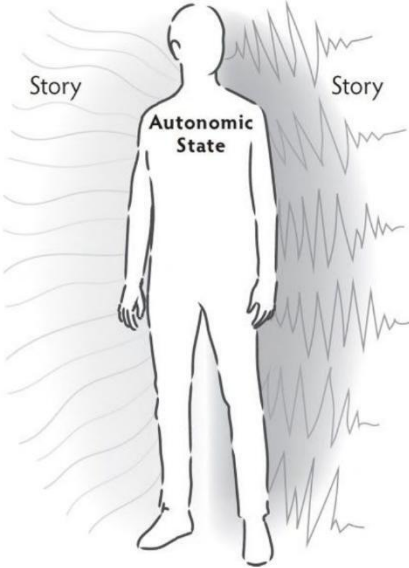
Polyvagal Theory provides an updated map of the autonomic nervous system, defining how this system shapes experiences of safety and impacts the ability for connection. Polyvagal Theory gives therapists a way to bring the autonomic nervous system directly into therapy and helps clients become active operators of their own nervous systems.

The stories clients tell themselves about who they are and how the world works begin in the autonomic nervous system. Information is sent through autonomic pathways from the body to the brain where it is translated into the beliefs that shape daily living. The brain takes the autonomic information and creates a story to make sense of what is happening in the body. If you want to change the story, start by changing the state.

Stephen W. Porges is the creator of Polyvagal Theory. Dr. Porges first outlined his theory in his Presidential Address at the annual meeting of the Society for Psychophysiological Research in 1994. His address was then published in the society's journal, *Psychophysiology* (Porges, 1995). Dr. Porges has continued to elaborate and expand the theory in articles, books, and lectures. Since its introduction, Polyvagal Theory has been referenced in thousands of peer-reviewed research articles and has been incorporated into the clinical work of thousands of therapists around the world.

The Polyvagal Flip Chart is based on the constructs and principles developed and named by Dr. Porges to explain his theory. On each

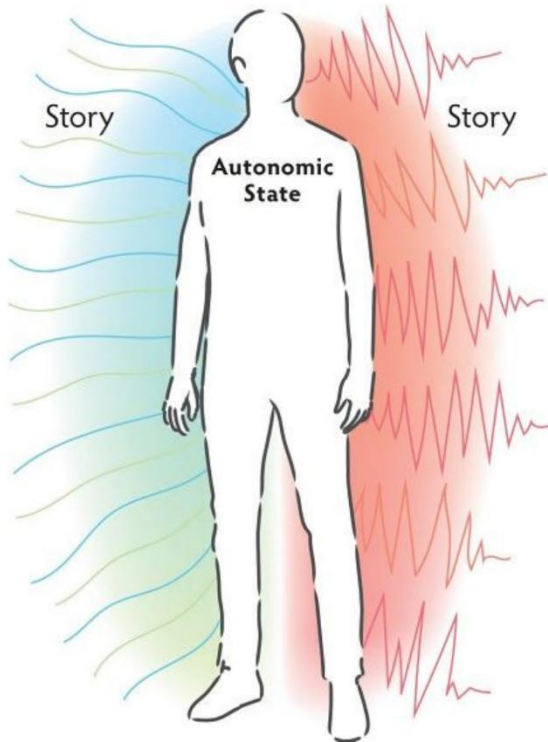
page of the Flip Chart, concepts related to Polyvagal Theory are presented. For those interested in reading the foundational sources, references are listed on the last page of the Flip Chart.



What is Polyvagal Theory?

Polyvagal Theory is a theory of the ways the autonomic nervous system works. Polyvagal Theory:

- defines the ways the autonomic nervous system reacts to experiences and regulates responses
- describes the ways the autonomic nervous system takes in information and initiates a response to help us safely navigate the ordinary demands of a day along with the extraordinary challenges we sometimes face
- outlines a hierarchy of three biological pathways of response providing a map of the ways we predictably move in and out of engagement, mobilization, and collapse in response to daily experiences



**Stories about self, the world, and relationships are based in autonomic state.
State creates story.**

The autonomic nervous system looks for context, choice, and connection in order to find safety and regulation. When one of these is missing, a sense of unease develops and the autonomic nervous system prepares for protection. Explicitly attending to context, choice, and connection is important to the success of the therapy process.

Context—Clients don't often ask why the therapist is doing something in a certain way and therapists don't always think to offer that information. By providing information about why, what, and how, therapists are giving the context the autonomic nervous system needs to feel safe and engage in the therapeutic process.

Choice—When choice is restricted or when there is a feeling of being trapped, the autonomic nervous system senses danger and enacts a survival response. Where to sit, proximity, focus of the session, modality to use, and pace of work are examples of choices therapists can routinely offer.

Connection—The therapist's ability to be in ventral vagal regulation and offer that regulating energy to clients is key to the success of therapy. Connecting with a client, tracking moments of disconnection, and returning to connection is the foundation of the therapeutic relationship. Bringing these moments into explicit awareness increases safety.

Co-regulation, Neuroception, and Hierarchy are three of the organizing principles of Polyvagal Theory.

*image
not
available*