



# Polyvagal Theory Chart

## Deciphering Cues of the Autonomic Nervous System

Returning to Safety ↑  
Perceived Danger ↓

**Window of Tolerance - Ventral Vagal State**  
*Safe and Connected*

- Calm
- Curious
- Creative
- Regulated
- Can manage hard times while maintaining perspective
- Able to learn & think critically

Ability to heal  
Digestion  
Circulation  
Sleep quality  
Oxytocin  
(involved in bonding + connection with others)

Defensive Responses

**Hyperarousal - Sympathetic State**  
*Fight or Flight*

**Moving Toward**  
Tension  
Frustration  
Irritability  
Agitation  
Anger  
Rage

**Moving Away**  
Worry  
Restlessness  
Stress  
Obsessive  
Anxiety  
Panic

Oxygen to vital organs  
Blood pressure  
Heart rate  
Muscle tension  
Breathing  
Adrenaline

Insulin  
Digestion  
Saliva  
Immune system  
Blood flow to non-vital organs

**Mixed State**  
*Sympathetic & Dorsal Vagal*  
**F R E E Z E**  
I need to take action but *FROZEN* in place.  
*Feelings of dread, overwhelmed, paralyzed.*

**Hypo-Arousal - Dorsal Vagal State**  
*Collapse*

- Shame
- Helpless
- Hopeless
- Withdrawn
- Depression
- Despair
- Going through the motions
- Foggy
- Numb
- Dissociation

Fatigue  
Numbness  
Pain tolerance

Digestion  
Libido  
Insulin activity  
Muscle tone  
Immune response  
Heart rate & blood pressure  
Eye contact

I can do something:  
*Fight or Flee*

I can't do anything:  
*Collapse*