

WHY IT MATTERS

Your body has been keeping you safe — all along.

You are not broken — your system is responding.

Your nervous system is constantly listening — to the world, to the people around you, and to the signals inside your body. It works beneath conscious awareness, shifting your state to help you meet whatever is happening.

When we understand *why* we feel anxious, shut down, or overwhelmed, we can begin to meet ourselves with curiosity rather than judgement.

SIGNS OF DYSREGULATION

- ⚡ Racing thoughts, restlessness, a sense of dread.
- ⚠ Feeling on edge, easily startled or irritable.
- 🌫 Numbness, foggy thinking, wanting to disappear.
- 🌙 Trouble sleeping or feeling rested.
- 💎 Body tension — jaw, shoulders, gut, breath.
- ✕ Disconnection from people you care about.

TRY THIS · AN ORIENTING BREATH

1 min

1. Slowly turn your head and let your eyes wander.
2. Notice colours, shapes, light — without naming why.
3. Lengthen the out-breath. Whisper: *I am here.*

KEY REMINDERS

- 💚 *I am not broken — my system is responding.*
- 🌀 *Sensations pass. States shift. I can wait.*
- 🌱 *Safety can be built in small, repeatable moments.*
- 🍃 *I am allowed to slow down.*
- 🤝 *Connection with self and others is helpful and seeking this is not a sign of weakness.*

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

A gentle map for understanding what you feel.

Polyvagal Theory, developed by Dr Stephen Porges and brought into therapy by Deb Dana, helps explain how your body shifts between states of safety, mobilisation, and shutdown.

These shifts are *automatic* and *protective* — not choices, not flaws. With awareness and practice, we can gently guide ourselves back toward connection.

GET IN TOUCH



WEBSITE

www.calmcornerapp.com

FURTHER READING

Dana, D. (2018). *The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy*. Norton.
Dana, D. (2021). *Anchored: How to befriend your nervous system*. Sounds True.
Porges, S. (2017). *The Pocket Guide to the Polyvagal Theory*. Norton.
Levine, P. (1997). *Waking the Tiger*. North Atlantic Books.
van der Kolk, B. (2014). *The Body Keeps the Score*. Penguin.
Maté, G. (2022). *The Myth of Normal*. Vermilion.

GOOD TO KNOW ...



Offering your nervous system to someone else



Sit nearby at their pace. Soften your face and lower your voice.



Try a slow, audible exhale together — let them borrow your rhythm.



Offer a steady hand on the back or shoulder if welcome. Stay quiet, unhurried — let your calm be the message.

"I'm right here with you. Nothing to fix — let's just breathe for a minute."

A GENTLE GUIDE

Your Nervous System

A gentle guide to the body's wisdom — and how to befriend it.



INSIDE THIS LEAFLET

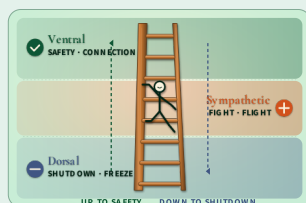
- The three nervous system states
- How to recognise each in yourself
- Glimmers, co-regulation & connection
- Practices to return to safety
- Building flexibility over time



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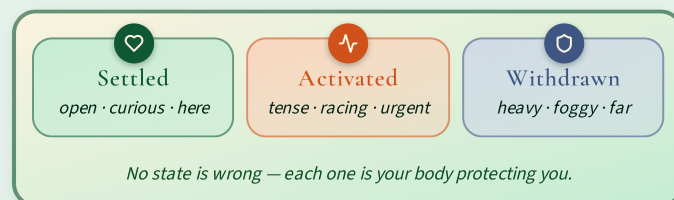
Three States, One System

Adapted from Dr Stephen Porges' theory about the Vagus Nerve: as the longest nerve, it acts as the primary tool for regulating bodily functions. It has two branches — the ventral (social) and dorsal (shutdown). Porges calls this Polyvagal Theory.



It can be helpful to imagine a nervous system ladder that we move up and down many times a day.

MEET THE THREE STATES



♥ Ventral Vagal

safety · connection · ease

Settled, curious, present. Open to others. Breathing easy. The world feels workable.

IN THE BODY: Soft face · open chest · steady breath

⚡ Sympathetic

mobilisation · fight or flight

Anxious, restless, irritable, racing thoughts. A surge of energy seeking action or escape.

IN THE BODY: Tight jaw · quick breath · racing heart

🛡️ Dorsal Vagal

shutdown · disconnection

Numb, foggy, heavy, hopeless. Withdrawn, low energy. The body conserving when overwhelm is too much.

IN THE BODY: Heavy limbs · shallow breath · faraway gaze

Where are you right now?

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Small ways to come home to yourself.

Match the practice to the state — gently.

⚡ When mobilised *sympathetic*

- Lengthen the out-breath — sigh it out.
- Press feet into the floor; feel the support.

🛡️ When shut down *dorsal*

- One small movement — a hand stretch, a step.
- Name three colours you can see.

♥ When settled *ventral · savour it*

- Pause and notice: *this is what safe feels like.*
- Anchor it — a phrase, a posture, a place.

🌸 In everyday moments 🌸

- **Morning:** feet on the floor, three slow breaths before reaching for your phone.
- **Before a hard email:** two slow sighs — let the shoulders drop.
- **Mid-argument:** notice your feet, soften your jaw.
- **End of day:** hand on heart — that was a lot, I'm here now.

🧘 Co-regulation

Caring for ourselves is important — but we are also wired to settle with others.

Co-regulation is the way one nervous system helps another find calm. Through warm tone, steady breath, and attuned presence, we send safety cues to each other — long before words are exchanged. It is how we first learned to settle as infants, and it remains a primary way our bodies return to balance throughout life.

Therapy as co-regulation

A safe therapeutic relationship offers the nervous system something it can rarely give itself — steady, attuned company while shifting state.

Tiny sparks of safety — notice them, savour them.

From Deb Dana — the small cues that quietly settle us.

☀️ **Glimmers** are the small moments that quietly remind your nervous system that safety *is* possible and does exist — a warm mug, a familiar song, a friend's smile. They are brief, easy to miss, and powerfully restorative when noticed. Focus on noticing and allowing the sense of safety to be felt, however brief that feeling might be.

🌟 A FEW EXAMPLES

☀️ Morning light through the window.
On waking — to start gently.

🌿 The weight of a pet leaning into you.
When you need to feel held.

☕ The first sip of warm tea.
Mid-morning pause or reset.

🎵 A line of music that softens you.
When tension is rising.

📞 A familiar voice on the phone.
When loneliness creeps in.

🌙 Cool sheets at the end of the day.
Winding down before sleep.

Unlike triggers, which evoke negative emotions and activate the body's stress response, glimmers stimulate feelings of calm and safety.

☀️ TRY THIS WEEK — NOTICE ONE GLIMMER

daily

- 1 **Step 1: See.** Throughout your day, notice moments when your body feels lighter, warmer, or more relaxed. These are glimmers.
- 2 **Step 2: Stop.** When you notice a glimmer, pause. Take one breath. Let your body register the feeling. Deb Dana suggests placing your hand on your heart to anchor the moment physically.
- 3 **Step 3: Appreciate.** Linger a beat longer. Silently thank the moment, name it, or share it — letting your nervous system know: this, too, is part of my life.

🌟 KEY REMINDERS

- ↑ Flow, not stillness.
Healthy regulation is *flexible movement* between states — not staying still in one.
- ♥ Shutdown deserves compassion.
Shutdown is a protective response, not a character flaw. It needs warmth and care — not pressure.

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