

How to Befriend Your Nervous System Using Polyvagal Theory

Polyvagal theory is a revolutionary new understanding of the nervous system that has the power to transform our lives. By learning how to tap into the body's natural calming system, we can reduce stress, anxiety, and trauma, and create a more fulfilling and connected life.



Anchored: How to Befriend Your Nervous System Using Polyvagal Theory by Deborah A. Dana

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

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The polyvagal theory was developed by Dr. Stephen Porges, a leading neuroscientist and researcher. Porges discovered that the vagus nerve, a long nerve that runs from the brain to the abdomen, plays a critical role in regulating the nervous system.

The vagus nerve has two branches: the ventral vagus and the dorsal vagus. The ventral vagus is responsible for calming the body and

promoting relaxation. The dorsal vagus, on the other hand, is responsible for activating the body's fight-or-flight response.

When we are in a safe and secure environment, the ventral vagus is activated and the dorsal vagus is deactivated. This allows us to feel calm, relaxed, and connected to others.

However, when we are in a stressful or threatening situation, the dorsal vagus is activated and the ventral vagus is deactivated. This causes us to feel anxious, stressed, and disconnected from others.

The good news is that we can learn how to activate the ventral vagus and deactivate the dorsal vagus. By doing so, we can reduce stress, anxiety, and trauma, and create a more fulfilling and connected life.

Here are 5 ways to activate the ventral vagus:

1. **Deep breathing:** Deep breathing helps to slow down the heart rate and activate the ventral vagus. To practice deep breathing, simply inhale slowly and deeply through your nose, and exhale slowly and deeply through your mouth.
2. **Singing or humming:** Singing or humming helps to stimulate the vagus nerve and activate the ventral vagus. You don't have to be a good singer to enjoy the benefits of singing or humming. Just let your voice flow freely and see how you feel.
3. **Massage:** Massage is a great way to relax the body and activate the ventral vagus. Massaging the neck, shoulders, and abdomen can be especially helpful.

4. **Yoga or tai chi:** Yoga and tai chi are mind-body practices that can help to reduce stress and anxiety and activate the ventral vagus. These practices combine gentle movements with deep breathing, which can help to calm the body and promote relaxation.
5. **Spending time in nature:** Spending time in nature can help to reduce stress and anxiety and activate the ventral vagus. Being in nature has been shown to lower blood pressure, heart rate, and cortisol levels, and to boost mood and well-being.

By activating the ventral vagus and deactivating the dorsal vagus, we can:

- Reduce stress and anxiety
- Improve sleep
- Boost mood
- Increase resilience
- Promote healing from trauma
- Create a more fulfilling and connected life

Polyvagal theory is a powerful tool that can help us to understand and regulate our nervous system. By learning how to activate the ventral vagus and deactivate the dorsal vagus, we can reduce stress, anxiety, and trauma, and create a more fulfilling and connected life.

To learn more about polyvagal theory, check out these resources:

- Stephen Porges' website
- The Polyvagal Theory: A Critical Review

- Polyvagal Theory: An



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