

**FREE GUIDE**

# **MAPPING AND BEFRIENDING YOUR AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM**

**Discover Your Inner Peace and  
Build a Foundation for Emotional  
Well-Being**

**YOUR PERSONAL  
PROFILE MAP**

**R E - C O N N E C T E D . C O M**

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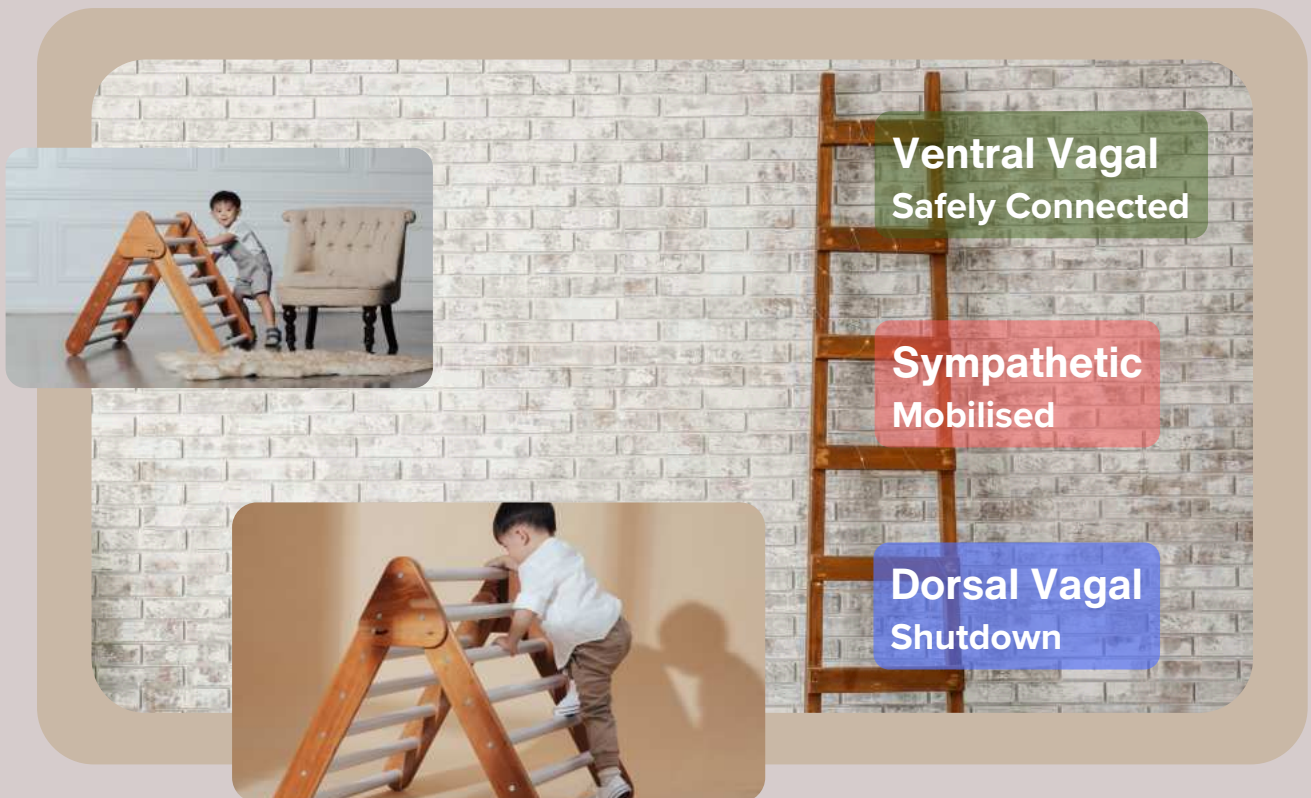
# INTRODUCTION

All humans have a built-in longing to be connected to self, others, nature and spirit. Connection is at the heart of well-being and a foundation of the Polyvagal Theory. When we are pulled out of connection into protective survival states, we disconnect from our aliveness, and we suffer physically, psychologically and emotionally. Understanding how to return to a regulated ventral state is the key to living a happy, balanced life. When firmly anchored in the ventral, we feel genuinely embodied, safe, present and ready to engage, play, work and love.

In this short PDF document, you will gain a new understanding of each of your autonomic states` architecture, roles, and survival responses. This process will put you on an explanatory journey of befriending your autonomic nervous system. By cultivating embodied awareness, you will be able to navigate and influence this unconscious, automatic system, ultimately experiencing the profound benefits of feeling safe and connected.

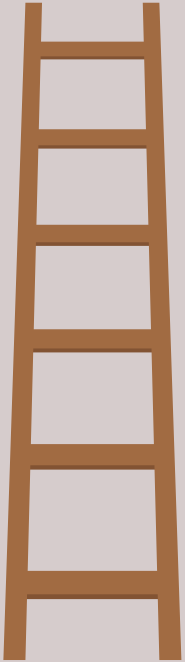
# IMAGINE YOUR AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM AS A LADDER

Let's dive into understanding and exploring the autonomic nervous system (ANS) by visualising it as a ladder. Your experiences will shift as you move up and down this ladder, reflecting the different states of your nervous system.



# 2 CHAPTER

## THE TOP OF THE LADDER: FEELING SAFE AND CONNECTED



### **Ventral Vagal- Parasympathetic**

#### **Social Engagement**

#### **Safety, Play, Connecting**

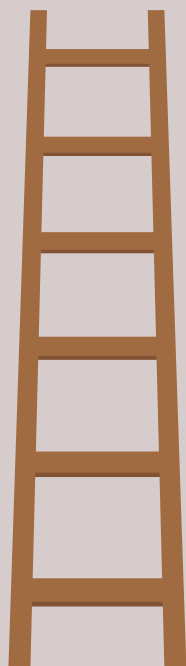
Picture yourself at the top of the ladder. Here, you feel safe, warm, and connected. It's like a cosy hug, full of gentle strength, where tears and laughter come naturally. You're free to be yourself—whether that means staying, sharing, or stepping away.

The ventral vagal pathway of your parasympathetic nervous system powers this sense of security and connection. In this state, your heart beats steadily, and your breathing is deep and relaxed. You're attuned to the faces and voices around you, able to tune out distractions and truly connect with the world and the people in it. You might describe yourself as happy, engaged, and calm, seeing the world as a safe, fun, and peaceful place.

When you're here, life feels manageable. You are composed and well-organised, follow through with plans, take care of yourself, and find time for fun. You feel productive, connected, and at ease. Health-wise, this state supports a healthy heart, regulated blood pressure, strong immunity, good digestion, restful sleep and a strong sense of well-being.

# 3 CHAPTER

## MOVING DOWN THE LADDER: THE GRIP OF FEAR



**Sympathetic**

**Fight or Flight**

**Mobilised, Activated, Danger**

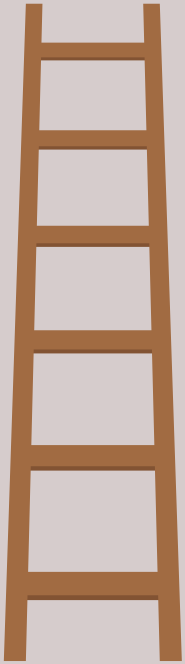
As you descend the ladder, fear begins to whisper. You feel an urge to move, escape, and protect yourself—suddenly, everything and everyone feels like a threat. Your sympathetic nervous system kicks in at this moment, triggering the fight-or-flight response.

In this state, your heart races, your breath becomes shallow, and you're on high alert, scanning your surroundings for danger. You might feel anxious, angry, or restless, unable to sit still. The world around you seems chaotic and unsafe, fueling the belief that you must protect yourself at all costs.

In this state, daily life can become a struggle. Anxiety, panic, anger, and difficulty focusing may arise, straining your relationships. Health issues like heart disease, high blood pressure, sleep problems, and chronic tension can result from staying in this state too long.

# 4

## CHAPTER THE BOTTOM OF THE LADDER: SHUTDOWN AND DISCONNECTION



### **Dorsal Vagal - Parasympathetic**

#### **Freeze**

#### **Collapse, Immobilised, Shutdown, Life threat**

Now, imagine yourself at the very bottom of the ladder. It's a dark, lonely place where you feel small, silent, and barely present. This is where the dorsal vagal pathway of your parasympathetic nervous system takes over—a last resort when all else fails.

In this state, you shut down, collapse, and disconnect from the world. You might feel hopeless, exhausted, and detached as if the world has gone dark and empty. You may believe, “I am lost, and no one can find me.” Daily life becomes challenging as energy drains away, leaving you feeling alone, foggy, and too tired to function. Health issues like chronic fatigue, digestive problems, and low blood pressure can occur when you're stuck here.

# CHAPTER 5 MAPPING YOUR PERSONAL PROFILE

Creating a Personal Profile Map helps you safely connect with and understand your experiences in these three states—ventral regulation, sympathetic mobilisation, and dorsal shutdown. The process invites you to gently explore your survival states without becoming overwhelmed.

**Here's how you can create your map**

## 1

### START WITH SYMPATHETIC SURVIVAL

Recall a time when you felt the fight-or-flight response—when anxiety or anger took hold. Let the memory become vivid but not overwhelming. In the sympathetic section of your map, describe what it feels like in this state. What happens in your body? How do you behave? What are your thoughts and feelings? How does this state affect your sleep, eating habits, and compulsive behaviours? Finish by filling in the sentences “I am...” and “The world is...”. These statements reflect the core beliefs that drive your experiences in this state.

# 2

## MOVE TO DORSAL SURVIVAL

Now, think of when you felt the energy drain from your system, leading to shutdown. This state has too little energy, and you might feel disconnected, unseen, and alone. Describe what this state looks and feels like. How does it affect your body, behaviour, thoughts, and emotions? Fill in the sentences “I am...” and “The world is...”. These will help you identify the core beliefs in this state.

# 3

## FINISH WITH VENTRAL REGULATION

Finally, map the state of ventral regulation. You don’t need a long period in this state—a small moment of feeling safe, connected, or at peace is enough. Reflect on what happens in your body, mind, and emotions when you’re in this state. How does it impact your daily life? Fill in the sentences “I am...” and “The world is...” to capture the essence of this state.

# 4

## PERSONALISE YOUR MAP

Once your map is complete, give each state a name that resonates with your experience (fill in the boxes on the right).  
This makes the map more personal and easier to relate to.

### WHERE AM I? COMPLETING YOUR PERSONAL PROFILE MAP

 <div>Ventral Vagal Safely Connected</div>	<div>THE WORLD IS ... I AM ...</div>	<div></div>
<div>Sympathetic Mobilised</div>	<div>THE WORLD IS ... I AM ...</div>	<div></div>
<div>Dorsal Vagal Shutdown</div>	<div>THE WORLD IS ... I AM ...</div>	<div></div>

# MAPPING YOUR REGULATED STATES

In addition to mapping survival states, it's essential to understand how your nervous system functions when regulated.

**Here's how to create your Regulated Ladder Map**

## 1

### START WITH DORSAL REGULATION

Notice the slow, steady rhythm of your dorsal system when it's in a regulated state. This state helps you rest, renew, and take care of your body. Write down what you notice in your body, thoughts, and feelings. Finish with, "I am..." and "The world is...".

## 2

### MOVE TO SYMPATHETIC REGULATION

Now, focus on your sympathetic system's organised energy when it functions normally. This state gives you the energy to move through your day. Reflect on this state, and document your thoughts, emotions, and actions. Finish with, "I am..." and "The world is...".

# 3

## END WITH VENTRAL REGULATION

Revisit the state of ventral safety and connection. Explore how it feels to be connected to yourself, others, the world, and your sense of spirituality. Write down your observations, and complete the sentences, “I am...” and “The world is...”.

### REGULATED LADDER MAP

 <div data-bbox="124 1137 459 1317" style="background-color: #8ebf8e; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <b>Ventral Vagal</b>  <b>Four Pathways of Connection</b> </div>	<div data-bbox="491 1288 710 1355" style="text-align: left; padding-left: 10px;"> <b>THE WORLD IS ...</b>  <b>I AM ...</b> </div> <div data-bbox="1404 1075 1500 1361" style="background-color: #fff9c4; height: 128px;"></div>
<div data-bbox="124 1406 411 1585" style="background-color: #ff8a65; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <b>Sympathetic</b>  <b>Organised</b>  <b>Energy</b> </div>	<div data-bbox="491 1507 710 1574" style="text-align: left; padding-left: 10px;"> <b>THE WORLD IS ...</b>  <b>I AM ...</b> </div> <div data-bbox="1404 1395 1500 1579" style="background-color: #fff9c4; height: 82px;"></div>
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# REFLECTING ON YOUR MAP

Take a moment to review your completed map. What insights have you gained? What do you appreciate about how your nervous system supports your well-being?

Keep your map handy and check in with it regularly. Ask yourself, “Where am I on the map right now?” Recognise your state and listen to what your nervous system is trying to tell you. Acknowledging a message from your sympathetic, dorsal, or ventral state is the first step toward understanding and regulation.

Thank you for doing this exercise.

With gratitude

Krzysztof Warzybok