

The background is a dark blue gradient. It features a faint silhouette of a human brain in the center. Surrounding the brain are several gears of various sizes and designs, some with teeth and some without, scattered across the background.

The Personal Profile Map

**A Polyvagal Theory Tool
to Help Clients Respond to
Changes in their
Nervous Systems**

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(The Personal Profile Map Template)

The Personal Profile Map

The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy: Engaging the Rhythm of Regulation (Norton, 2018)

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Instructions for using the profile map and the ladder exercise

Life on the Ladder



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Mapping Autonomic Profiles

We travel along the autonomic hierarchy all the time.

We move “up and down the ladder” in large and small scale shifts.

The goal is to become flexible in those shifts.

Bring perception to neuroception and create a shared language and understanding.

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Notice and Name

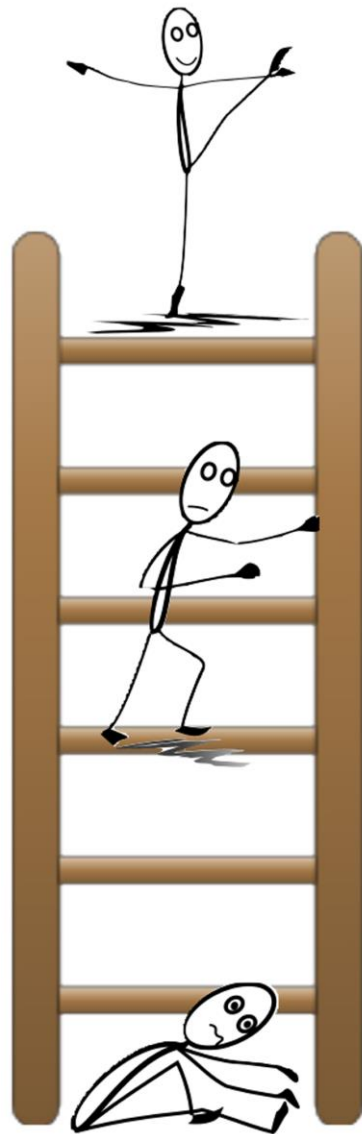
Become an expert state detector.

Engage with the state not simply be engaged by it.

Correct and predictable categorizing of autonomic state is a prerequisite for interrupting habitual response patterns.

Accurate state identification leads to choosing the right regulating intervention.

(Notice and Name handout)



Ventral Vagal

SAFE
connected
social

Sympathetic

DANGER
mobilized
action taking
fight and flight

Dorsal Vagal

LIFE-THREAT
immobilized
shut down
collapsed

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The Personal Profile Map

The Personal Profile map helps clients identify their individual experience of each state and answer the question, “Where am I on the autonomic hierarchy?”

Different states require different regulating responses so accurate information is important.

Mapping creates a shared understanding and language to explore experiences.

(Completing the Personal Profile Map handout)

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When disconnected from autonomic awareness, a client's state automatically becomes their story.

Through this map, clients can engage with their autonomic state not simply be engaged by it.

They can begin to reshape their relationship with their autonomic nervous system.

Learning to safely tune in and turn toward...

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When clients can predictably identify their state, their sense of being in the dark and out of control reduces.

Knowing where they are on their map brings clients a sense of organization.

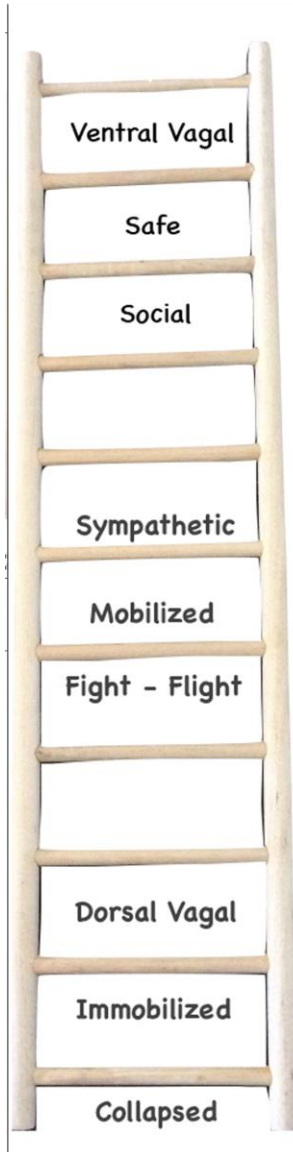
Mapping interrupts the automaticity of old stories and begins to build the capacity to separate state and story.

Routinely use this until placement becomes a habit.

Our own capacity to place ourselves on the autonomic ladder is equally important!

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Sample Profile Map



flow, connected, warm, open-hearted, curious, engaged, capable, organized, passionate, at ease

FLOW

I am...OK

The world is...welcoming, filled with opportunity

out of control, too much, confusing, overwhelming, angry confrontational, ready to run

CHAOS

I am...crazy, toxic

The world is...unfriendly, scary, exploding

dark foggy, fuzzy, silent, out of focus, cold numb, hopeless, helpless, shut down, disconnected

DARKNESS

I am...unloveable, invisible, lost and alone

The world is...cold, empty, uninhabitable

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