Polyvagal Theory

The Resilient Wandering Nerve
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Autonomic Nervous System

• Two branches
  1. Sympathetic
  2. Parasympathetic

• Protective Survival States

• Befriending our Nervous System

A Video about the Vagus Nerve

• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bNPfjLnnJzA
The Science of Connection

- The Social Engagement System: an Emergent Property of the Ventral Vagal Complex
- Mobilize Quickly, Act Skillfully, Take Care of Business
- Reshaping toward safety and connection

Window of Tolerance

- The zone in which various intensities of emotional arousal can be processed without disrupting the functioning of the system.
- It is where thoughts, emotions and behaviors remain balanced and effective.
- Finding the magic spot where discomfort is present but not all-consuming

A Picture of our Window
Reshaping Patterns of Engagement

• Therapy interventions that support autonomic regulation engages the social engagement system and quiets protective responses should have a powerful impact.

• Moving from survival to a foundation of ventral vagal regulation is the goal.

Neuroception: Autonomic Surveillance

• Ventral Vagal State maintains homeostasis

• Continuum of states:
  – Sympathetic danger
  – Dorsal vagal Life threat
  – Ventral vagal safety

• Where are you on the ladder?

Mapping the Nervous System
Breath
• Activating the Ventral Vagal
• Practicing the pause
• Aliveness that feels safe

Hierarchy of Nervous System Response

Triggers and Glimmers
• Helps clients identify their sympathetic and dorsal vagal sensitivities and ventral vagal strengths from a stance of curiosity.
• What is the ratio of triggers and glimmers?
• Over time is there a change in frequency, intensity, duration, ratio?
Regulating Resources Map

- Both interactive and individual streams of regulation, navigation of the experiences of daily living is possible.
- Face to face conversations is the most human and humanizing thing we do. (Sherry Turkle 2015)
- Movement is a natural part of the ventral vagal state of connection.

Reciprocity in Relationships

- Track reciprocity, rupture and repair
- Notice and name the rupture
- Understand it autonomically
- Find the right connection

Exploring Patterns and Tempo

- Brings clarity to areas of alignment and misalignment in relationships
- Patterns can be tracked within eight broad categories of daily activities, communication, work, plan, movement, physical intimacy, intimacy and spirituality.
- Within each connection there is a tempo
A Polyvagal Approach to Complex Trauma

- Intonation before information
  - Know where you are at on your map – name it

- Psychoeducation - Befriending
  - Recipe for hope

- Co-regulation
  - Consistency
  - Continuity

A Video of Deb Dana

- http://www.debdanalcsw.com/resources/Interview%20with%20Arnon.MOV

Honoring the Vagal Brake

- Promotes health, growth and restoration
- Lifting it in little spurts can promote thinking and planning while in ventral vagal state
- Exhale engages ventral vagal brake (sigh)
- Cues for safety (Feeling safe in myself and the world)
An Integrated System

- Autonomic Meditation

- Resources:
  - The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy by Deb Dana
  - The Polyvagal Theory by Stephen W. Porges