

# **SOMATIC PRACTICE:**

INCORPORATING THE BODY'S WISDOM

TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY

ENGAGEMENT

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Somatic Educator

# ABOUT ME

## Personally:

- Mexican American
- San Diego native
- South bay cross border experience
- Multi-generational upbringing
  - Pleasure activist
  - Shame disruptor

## Professionally:

- Early childhood mental health
  - Training and Facilitation
    - Trauma Trained
- System-level prevention work
- Somatic Experiencing practitioner

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

## LEARN

The different states of our nervous system

## EXPLORE

The ways our bodies react to those states

## IDENTIFY

Which situations may trigger activation

## PRACTICE

Scanning our bodies for sensation, activation and regulation signals

## GET CURIOUS

About ways to build awareness and shift our state

# WHAT WE'RE NOT GOING TO DO

JUDGE  
OURSELVES

FIX WHAT WE  
NOTICE

WORRY ABOUT  
WHAT IT MEANS

Can we give ourselves permission to be curious today?

# WHY SOMATIC PRACTICE?



Trauma & HOPE Informed Care teach us to have compassion for others and to include their strengths in their story.



Reflective Practice gives us the space to explore how we feel about our work



Somatic Practice invites you to reflect on how your body is digesting those feelings and brings you into a **compassionate relationship with yourself where you can access your strengths.**

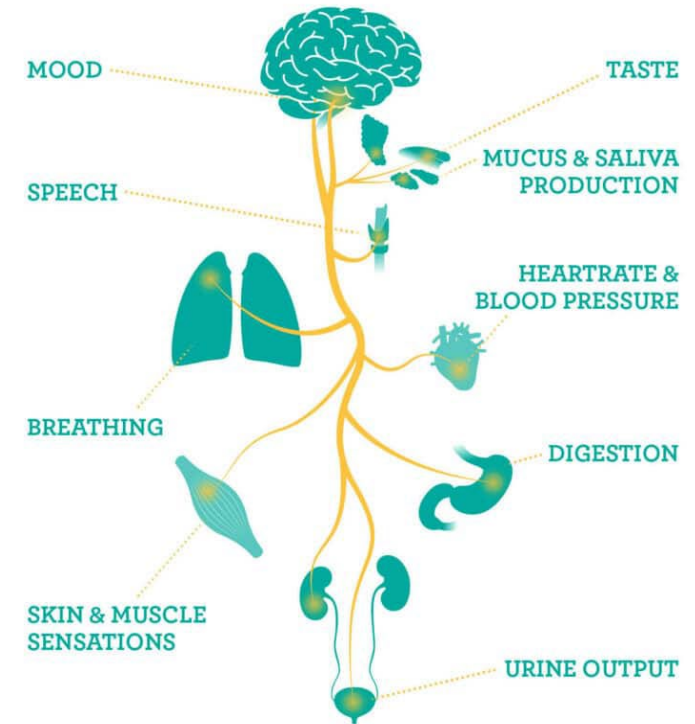
# WHAT DOES SOMATIC MEAN?

SOMA = Body

**Somatic Experiencing** is an alternative therapy aimed at treating trauma and stress related disorders through "bottom-up" processing.

To treat stress and trauma we study the nervous system. More specifically the **Autonomic Nervous System**, which connects your brain to most of your internal organs through the Vagus Nerve. The ANS has **sympathetic** and **parasympathetic** channels which help us understand what "state" we are in.

## What Does the Vagus Nerve Do?



AIM MD AMY MYERS MD®

"We live in a story that originates in our autonomic state, is sent through autonomic pathways from the body to the brain and is then translated by the brain into beliefs that guide our daily living. The mind narrates what the nervous system knows.

**Story follows state."**

Deb Dana, *The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy*

# WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?



Story follows state. The nervous system state we find ourselves in directly influences the quality of connections that we have with others.



Building awareness around the ANS will improve the quality of your connections



We can learn to manage our nervous system to yield better results in our lives



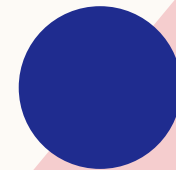
# WHAT ABOUT SAFETY?

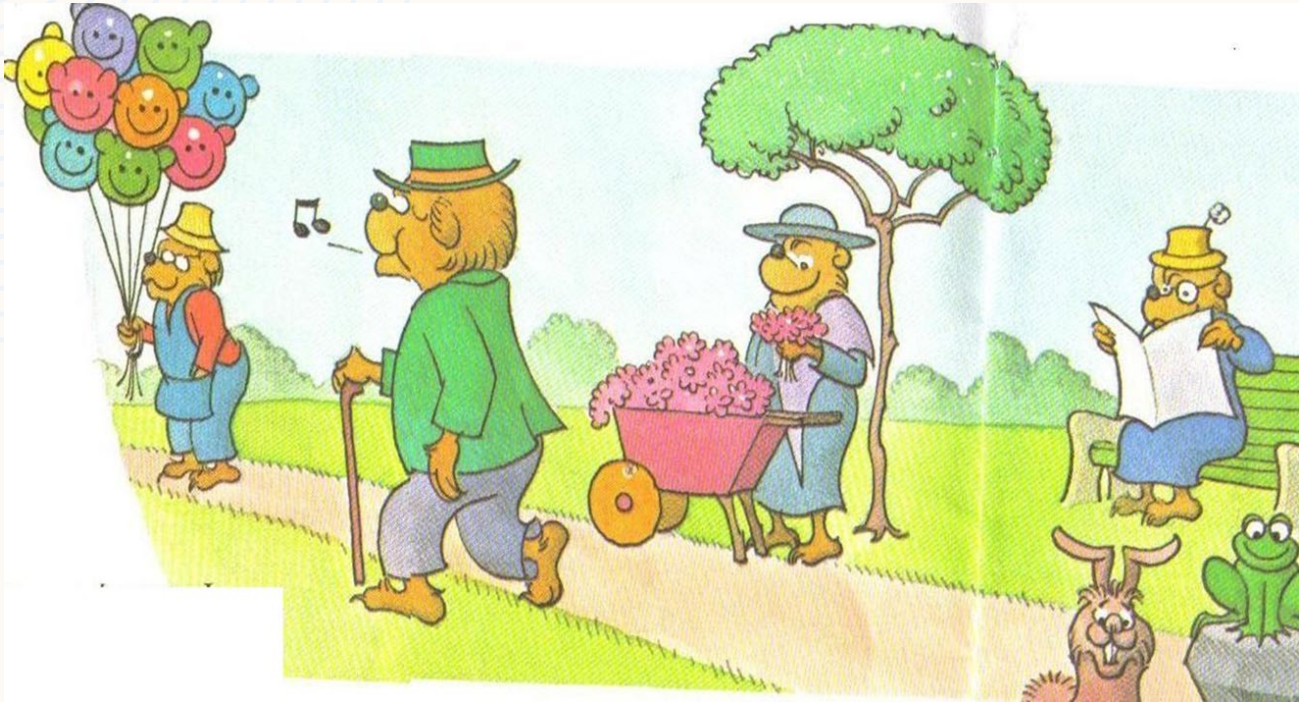
We can *influence* safety but we *can't guarantee* safety. Safety is largely cultivated *within* the individual.

"Safety isn't about the environment, the person or the situation. It's about your body and mind's ability to assess and experience the situation as safe.

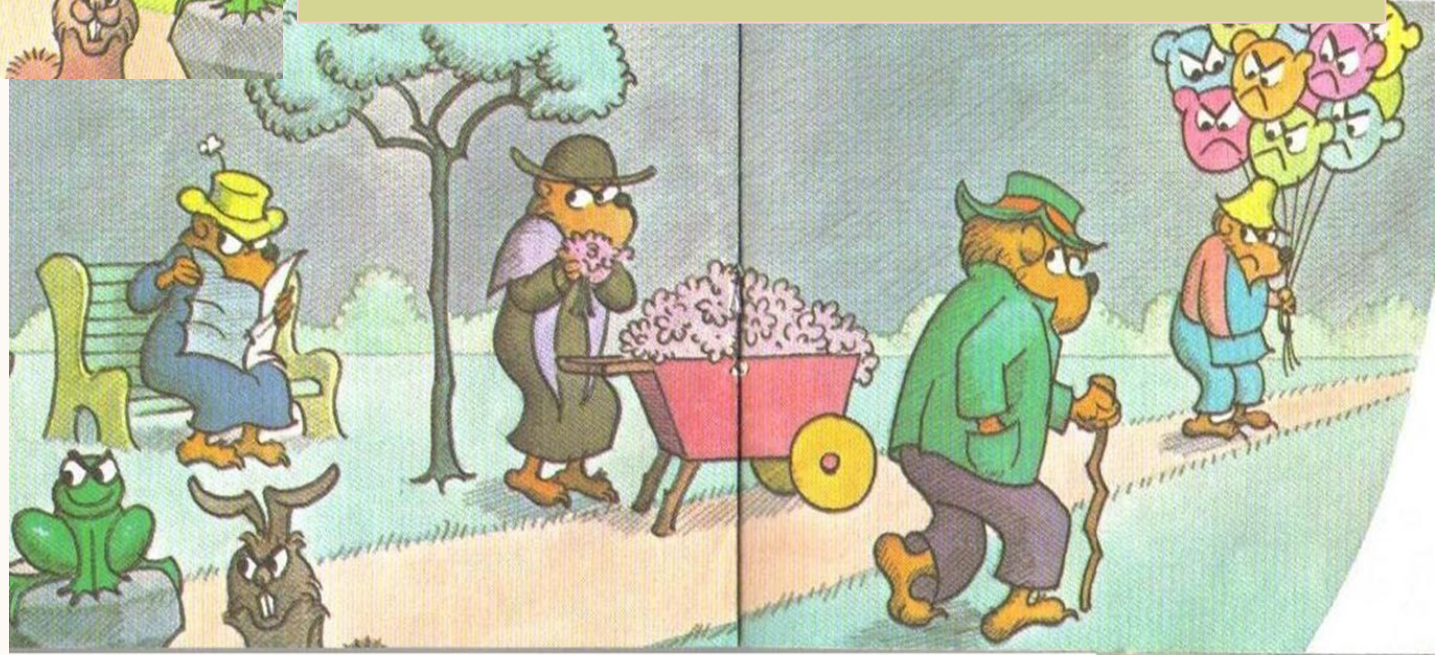
It happens inside of you as a result of orienting toward non-threat."

-Luis Mojica *Holistic Life Navigation*

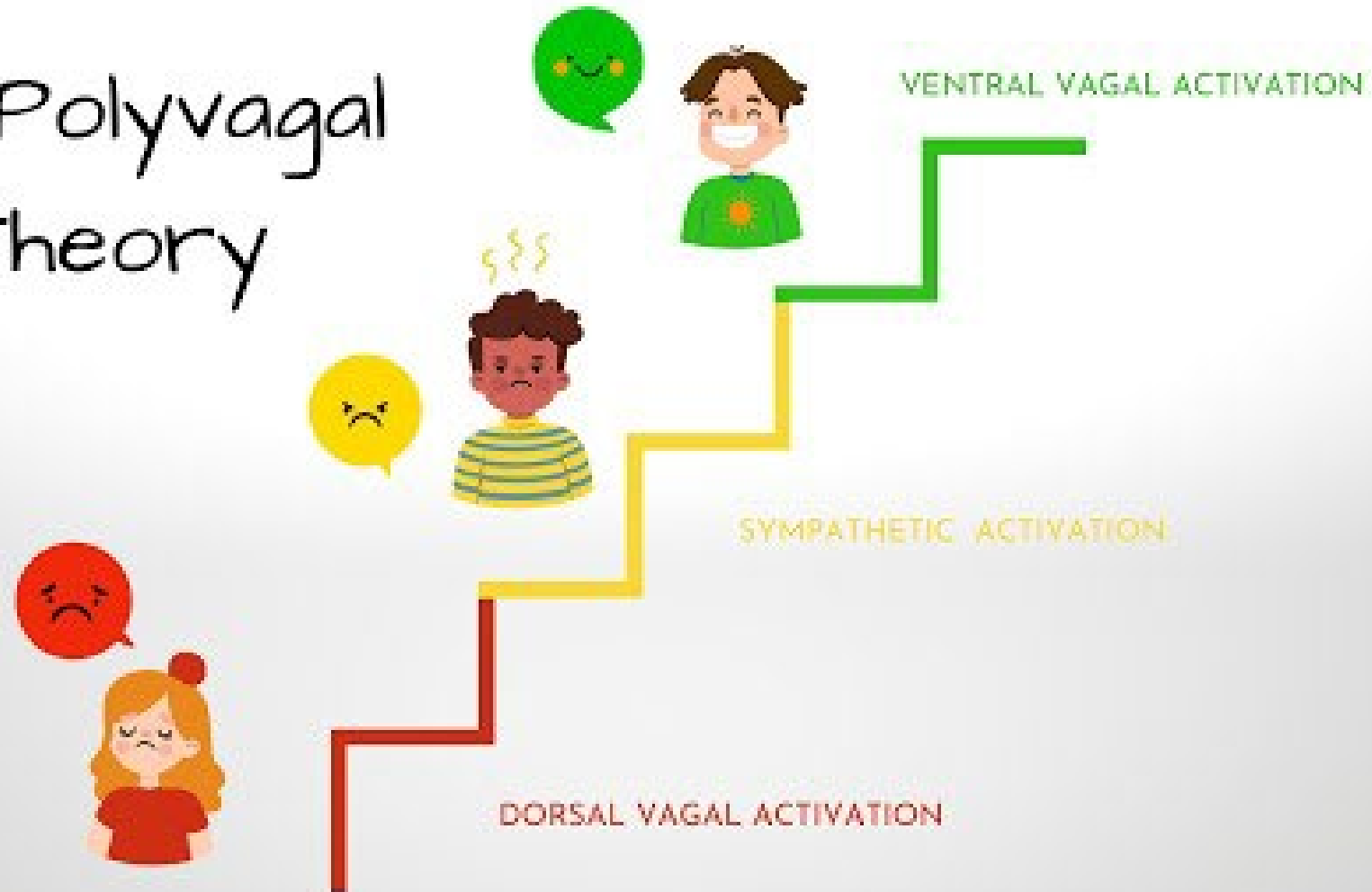




**TRAUMA IMPACTS  
THE WAY WE SEE  
THE WORLD**

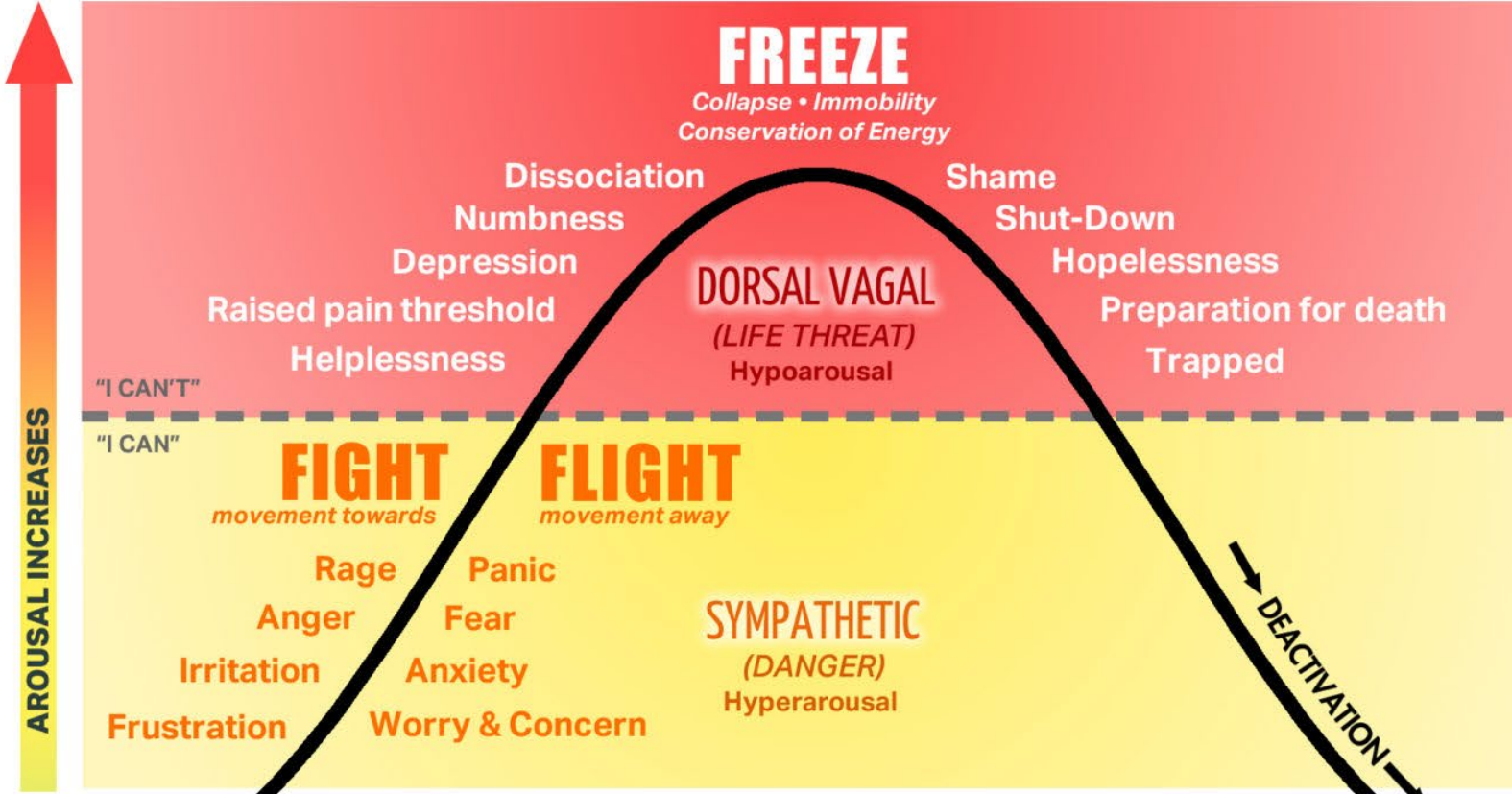


# The Polyvagal Theory



# POLYVAGAL CHART

The nervous system with a neuroception of threat:



## PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM DORSAL VAGAL COMPLEX

### Increases

Fuel storage & insulin activity • Immobilization behavior (with fear)  
Endorphins that help numb and raise the pain threshold  
Conservation of metabolic resources

### Decreases

Heart Rate • Blood Pressure • Temperature • Muscle Tone  
Facial Expressions & Eye Contact • Depth of Breath • Social Behavior  
Attunement to Human Voice • Sexual Responses • Immune Response

## SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

### Increases

Blood Pressure • Heart Rate • Fuel Availability • Adrenaline  
Oxygen Circulation to Vital Organs • Blood Clotting • Pupil Size  
Dilation of Bronchi • Defensive Responses

### Decreases

Fuel Storage • Insulin Activity • Digestion • Salivation  
Relational Ability • Immune Response

The nervous system with a neuroception of safety:



## PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM VENTRAL VAGAL COMPLEX

### Increases

Digestion • Intestinal Motility • Resistance to Infection  
Immune Response • Rest and Recuperation • Health & Vitality  
Circulation to non-vital organs (skin, extremities)  
Oxytocin (neuromodulator involved in social bonds that allows immobility without fear) • Ability to Relate and Connect  
Movement in eyes and head turning • Prosody in voice • Breath

### Decreases

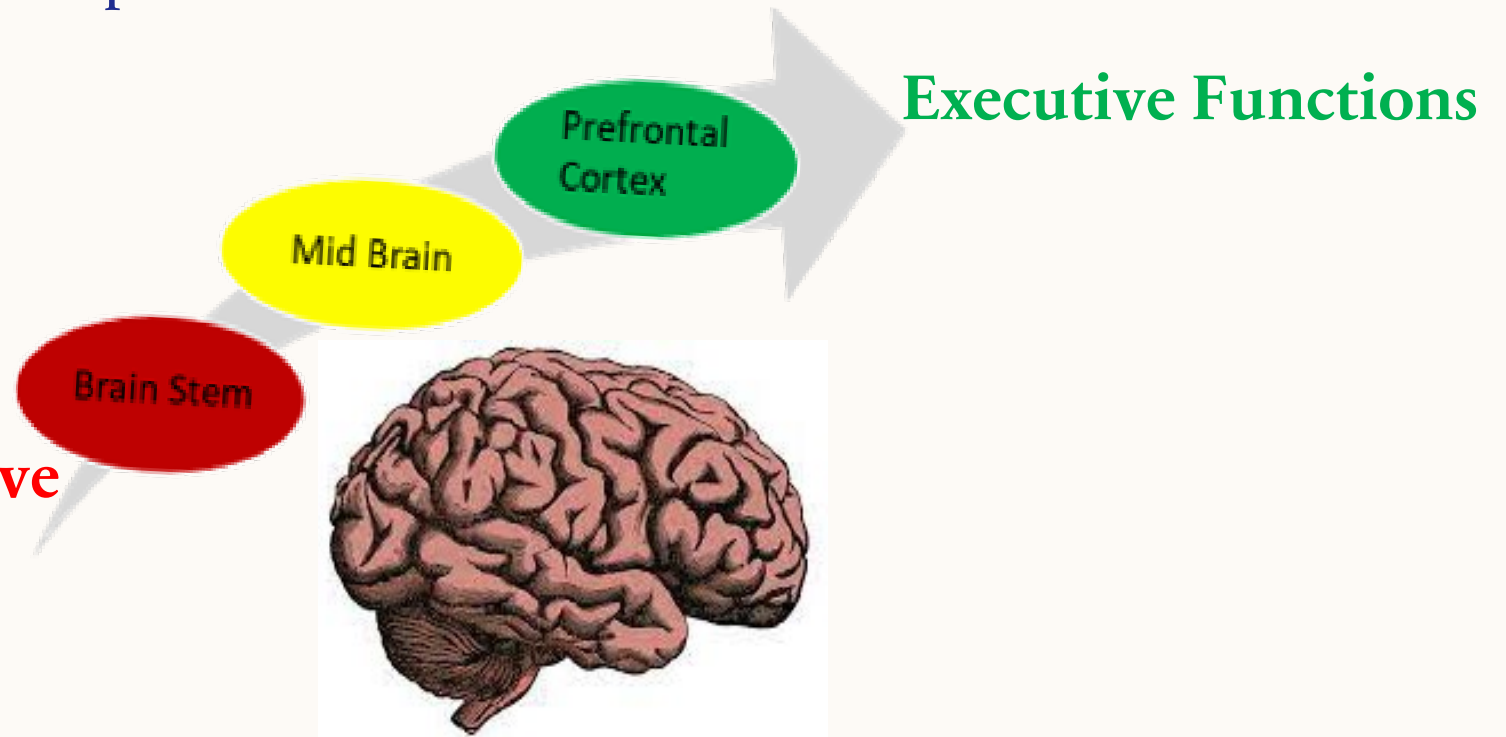
Defensive Responses

# HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO OUR BRAIN AND ENVIRONMENT?

Brain structure parallels our Autonomic Nervous System. Our brains grow and operate/fire from the bottom up.

Emotions and Sensations

Basic functions to stay alive





# PAUSE TO ABSORB

B-5 Somatic Practice  
15th Annual Early Childhood Mental Health Conference - We Can't Wait

# TELL ME ABOUT YOUR DAY

As you go through each point of your day, ask "did that move me closer to activation or regulation?", sort it into either column.

ACTIVATING

REGULATING



How can we build awareness  
around how we show up, so that we  
can engage in more quality  
connections?



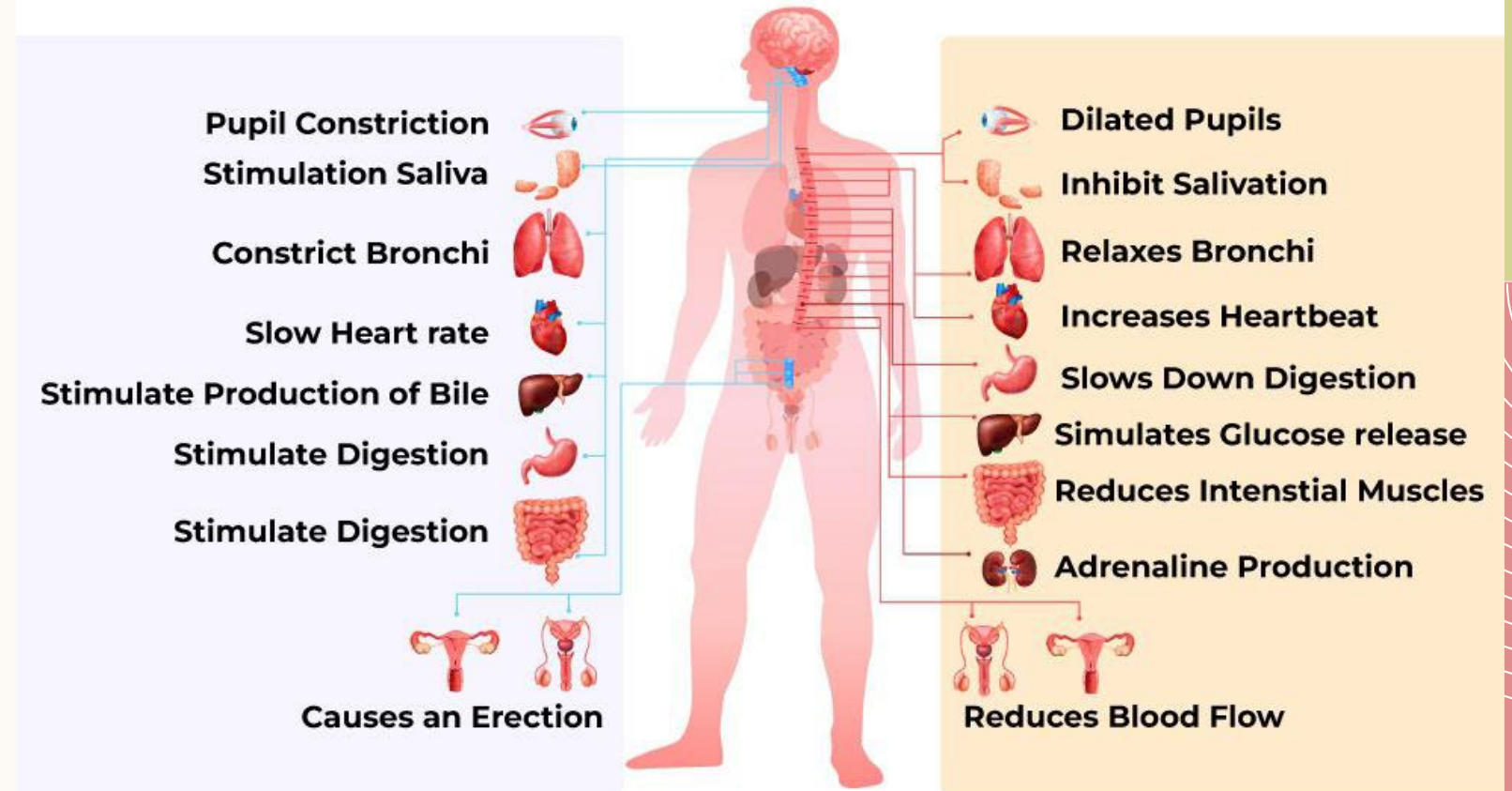


**HOW DO I  
KNOW  
WHICH  
STATE I'M  
IN?**

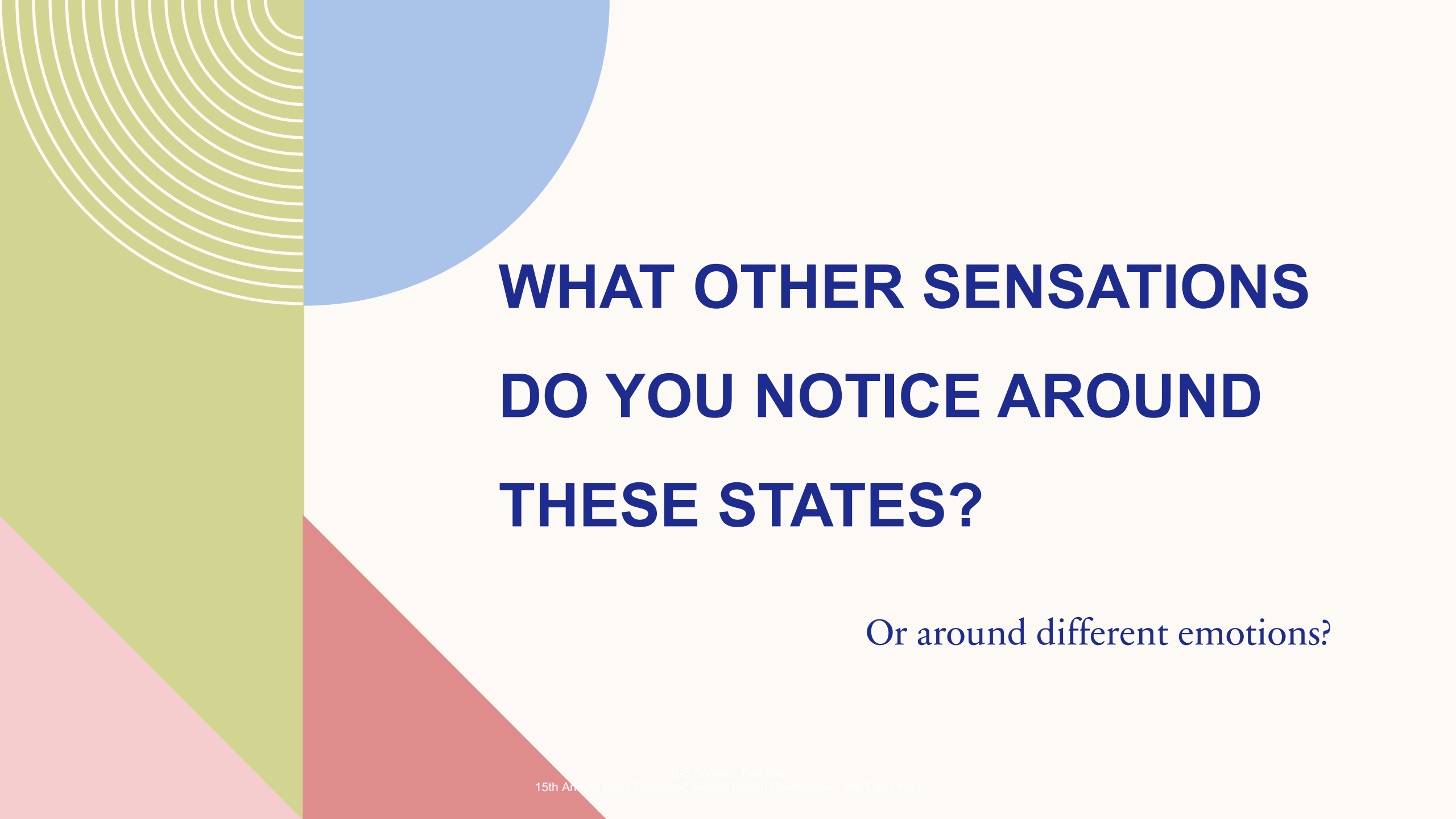
## Autonomic Nervous System

### PARASYMPATHETIC

### SYMPATHETIC



Physiological signs and sensations



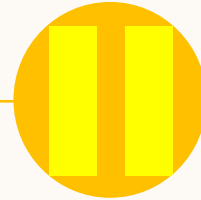
**WHAT OTHER SENSATIONS  
DO YOU NOTICE AROUND  
THESE STATES?**

Or around different emotions?

# WHICH SITUATIONS AT WORK HAVE YOU FEELING...



**Happy**  
**Excited**



**Avoidant**  
**Helpless**  
**Anxious**  
**Annoyed**



**Frustrated**  
**Angry**  
**Hopeless**  
**Defeated**

# MAPPING YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM

## Name your states

- What do you want to call your **Ventral Vagal**, **Sympathetic** and **Dorsal Vagal** states?

## Identify your triggers and glimmers

- Triggers – things that cause you to feel stress and activates your **Sympathetic** state
- Glimmers – things that cause you to drop into your **Ventral Vagal** state

Work by [Arianne Missimer](#)

# WHAT NOW?

Nurture a relationship with your body.

Keep mapping out how you climb up and down the ladder throughout your day.

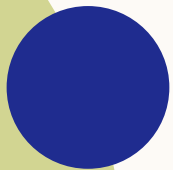
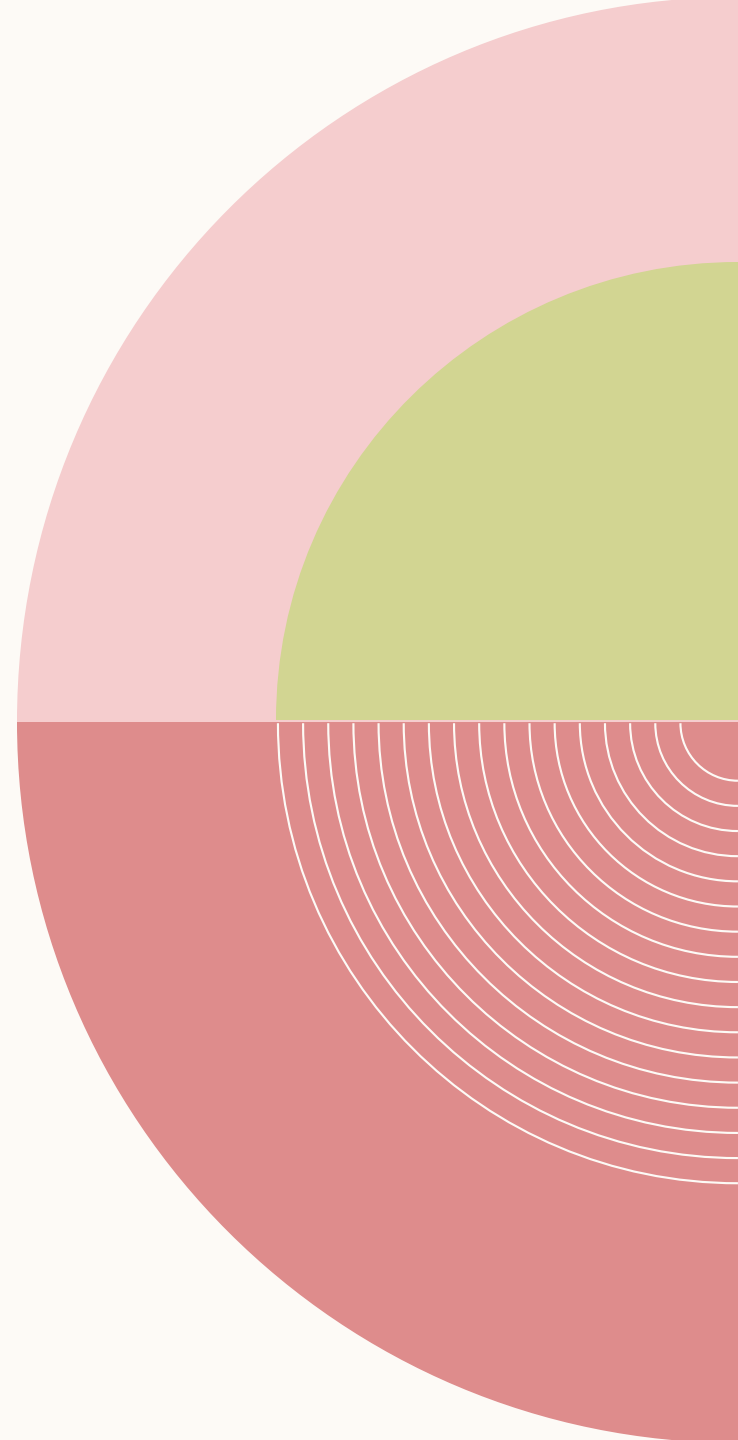
Be mindful of what you consume and how it influences your nervous system states.

Start asking each other "What are you noticing? What is coming up for you? (\*Assuming you've asked permission)



# SOMATIC PRACTICE

Is an invitation for you to reflect on how your body is digesting your feelings about your work and into a compassionate relationship with yourself where you can access your strengths and improve your engagement with others.



# THANK YOU

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