



Your Daily Practice

Episode 51

How to Use Polyvagal Theory to Re-Tune Your Nervous System and Feel Safe Enough to Be Yourself With Dr. Stephen Porges

According to Dr. Stephen Porges, Polyvagal theory is about the science of safety and the biology of trust. Your physiology impacts your behavior more than you think and when you feel safe, you are better able to connect with others, be bold, and free to be yourself. Here are three polyvagal informed strategies to help re-tune your nervous system toward safeness.

Practices to try this week:

1. Titrate your social engagement:

- Being around others is very important to your nervous system and your wellbeing. But as Dr. Porges described, it can feel overwhelming after the pandemic to be social. Slowly increase your social interactions to increase your zone of tolerance to get the benefits of social engagement without flooding your nervous system.

2. Visualize being around people who make you feel safe to be yourself:

- Whether it's a pet, friend or spiritual figure, imagine another being who regulates your nervous system. Visualization can have a powerful impact on your physiology through classical conditioning. When you visualize that figure, your body remembers and responds as if it was in their presence. Use this visualization to retune your nervous system when you feel unsafe or triggered.

3. Use your voice.

- The ventral vagus nerve is stimulated by vocalizations. Try humming, chanting, or singing to tone your ventral vagus through breath and sound. Even better if you do it with others!

4. Soften and smile with your eyes.

- The muscles around our eyes express exuberance, happiness and safety. When you smile with your eyes you activate those feelings within yourself and send them out to others.