

EMPOWERED²

PRESENTS...

Your Mood Matters!





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Secrets to Channeling Your Ultimate "Zen" for Optimal Coregulation

THE PERKS OF BEING A "PARENT" CRP

- They push all your buttons
- Your history with them
- Presuming competence is sometimes a process
- Your future with them
- “Future-tripping” which takes practice & discipline to avoid

^none of this occurs with the professional S2C practitioner who is working with your child.





Why Do Parents Need to be CRPs?

- S2C is a parent-driven program.
- I guarantee there is no one your child wants to communicate directly with more than you.
- You deserve to hear first-hand what your child's deepest thoughts and feelings are.
- You are also uniquely qualified to be the hero of your child's journey.
- No one should have to depend on a professional to communicate with their own child for the rest of their lives.

What We Will Cover

- What is regulation
- What does “arousal” level mean
- How the sensory system & autonomic nervous system affect regulation
- Polyvagal Theory (the 3-step ladder)
- Autism & Neuroception
- What is coregulation
- Achieving coregulation during S2C sessions
- Avoiding dysregulation during S2C sessions
- What to do when it happens anyway
 - Dealing with “fight or flight” mode
 - Dealing with “freeze” mode
 - Dealing with your own dysregulation
- Setting yourself up for success during S2C sessions





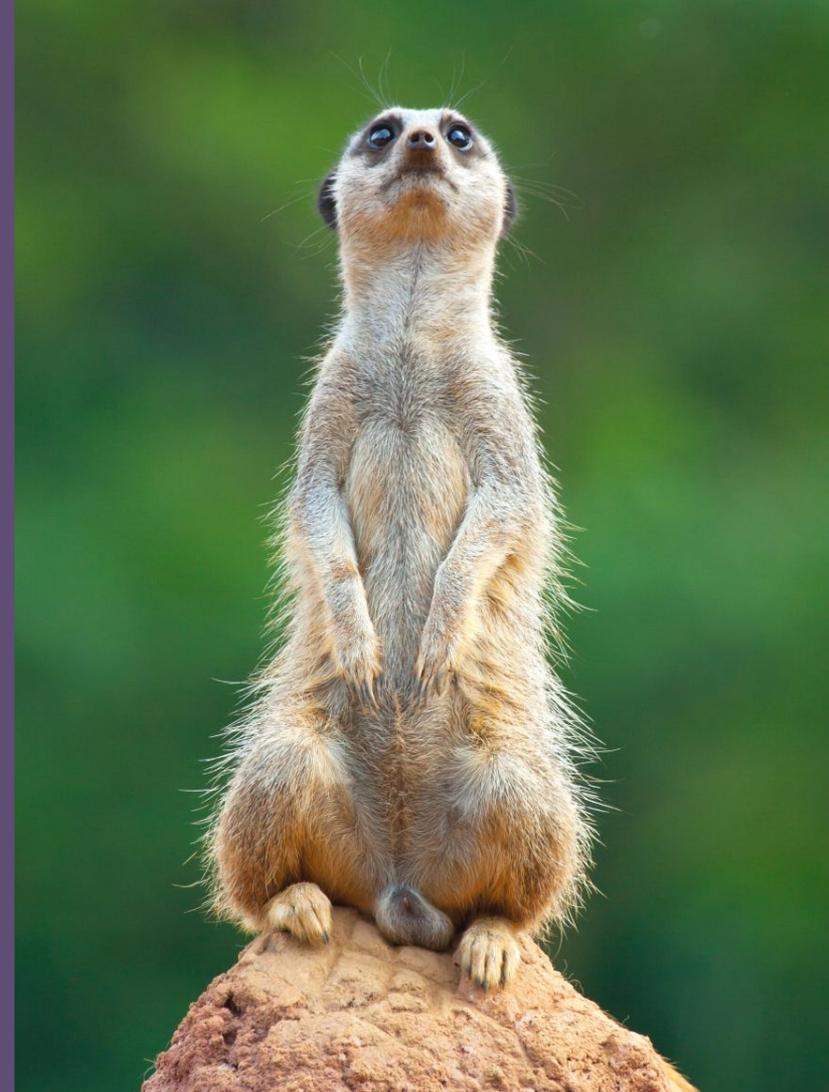
What is Regulation?

- Managing yourself
 - Recognizing internal needs
 - Making good decisions in the moment
 - Responding to your emotions in adaptive ways
- A sense of balance
- A state of feeling “calm, alert, ready and available for engaging with others.”

"Arousal" Levels

Arousal levels are the level of alertness or responsiveness to stimuli.

- It is controlled by the reticular activating system (RAS) in the brainstem
- Influenced by emotions, sensory input, and neurotransmitters - dopamine, norepinephrine, acetylcholine, and serotonin
- Involved in the “fight, flight, or freeze” response
- Those with sensory differences are usually over responsiveness and under responsiveness
- Hyper-responsiveness = high arousal level
- Hypo-responsiveness = low arousal level

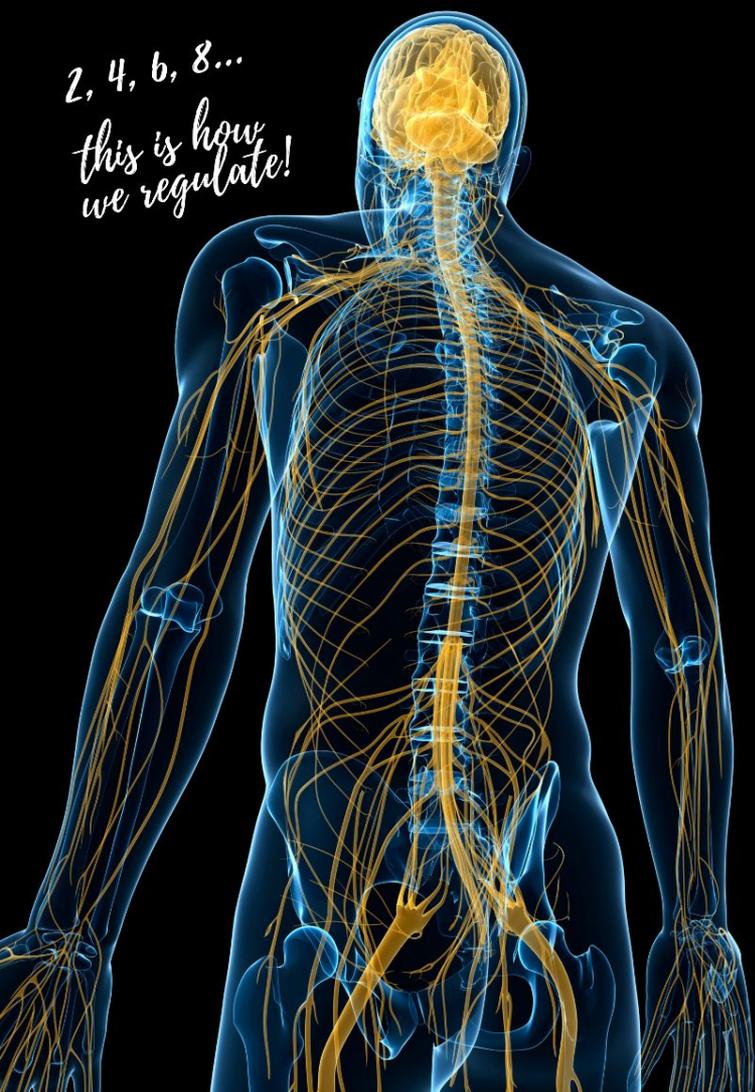


Impact of the Sensory System on Self- Regulation

The ability to self-regulate depends on many things including ability to process incoming sensory information efficiently.

- Your child has difficulty processing sensory input and therefore struggles to maintain regulation.
- We were not born with the ability to self-regulate.
- Our caregivers co-regulated with us until we could do it ourselves
- Your child's neurological system may be extremely sensitive to various things and as a result, they struggle to self-regulate when they are exposed to certain things. The tricky part is sometimes it's difficult to figure out what the trigger is.
- When your child is nonspeaking, minimally or unreliably speaking, it's challenging to know why they are dysregulating. However, if we can learn more about their sensory profile, we can help them to self-regulate by co-regulating with them.

2, 4, 6, 8...
*this is how
we regulate!*



Autonomic Nervous System

The SCIENCE behind regulation

- Traditional view - has two parts (SNS / PSNS)
- Steven Porges, PhD - The Polyvagal Theory
- Vagus nerve actually has two separate branches
 - Ventral branch (positive states of relaxation and social engagement)
 - Dorsal branch (slow down / shut down / depressive behavior)
- So not only do these 3 circuits regulate the function of our organs, they regulate our emotional states which drive our behavior!

Metaphor for the 3 Branches



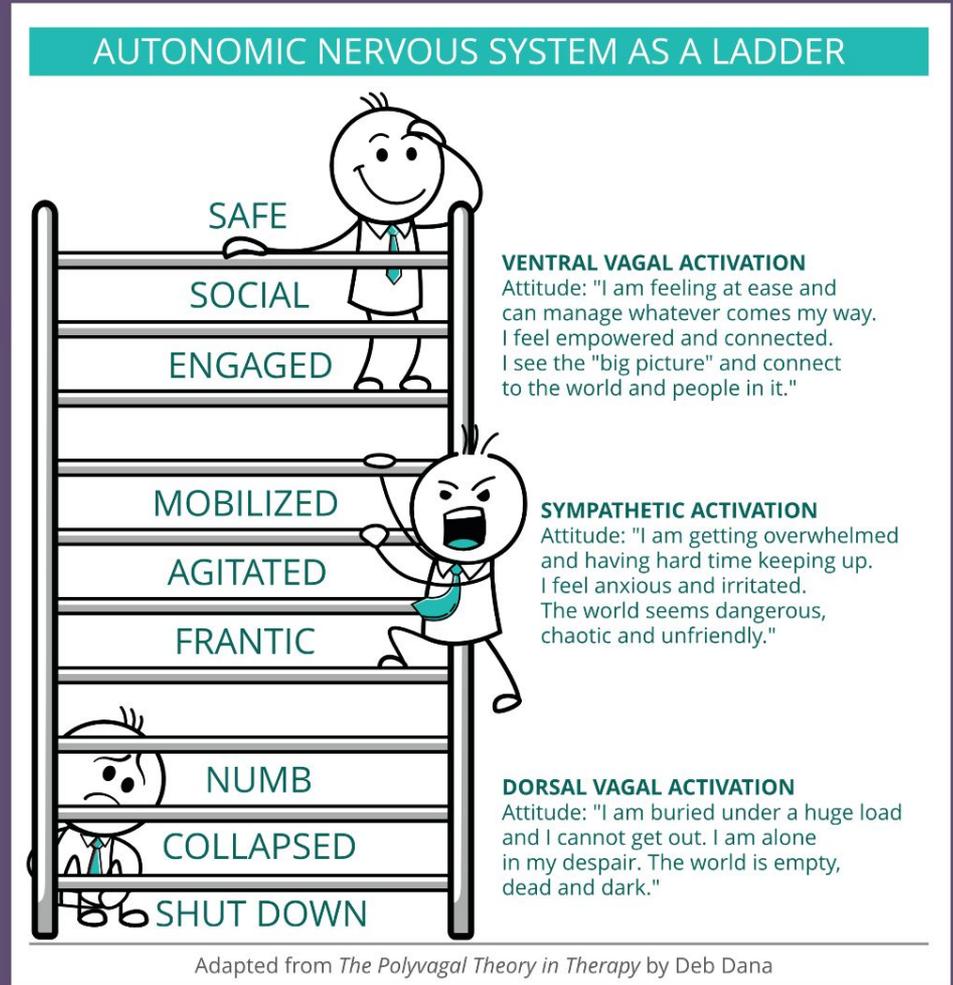
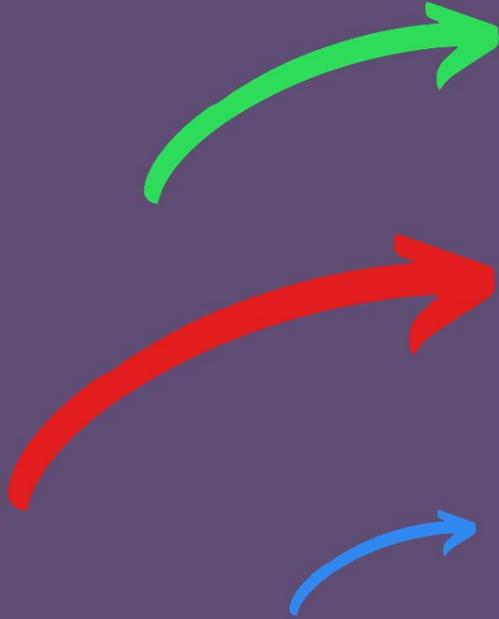
Quality of the tone of the musculature in the ANS can be:

- **Too hard / hot** (sympathetic)
- **Too soft / cold** (shutdown state of dorsal vagus)
- **Just right** (social engagement, ventral branch + 4 cranial nerves related to social engagement)



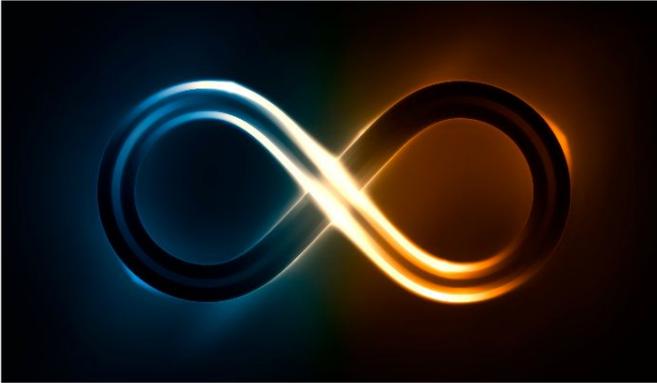
A 3- Step Ladder

The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy,
by Deb Dana



Autism & Neuroception

- Sensory Processing is dependent on the brain's ability to process input from all of our senses:
 - Touch (Tactile)
 - Taste (Gustatory)
 - Hearing (Auditory)
 - Sight (Visual)
 - Smell (Olfactory)
 - Spatial Awareness (Proprioception)
 - Balance (Vestibular)
- 90% of children and adults with autism experience some disruption in sensory processing (Leekam et al. 2007)



Irregular neural connectivity is associated with ASD including a reduction in long range neural connections to facilitate sensory processing (Torres, 2018).

However, along with sensory processing differences, studies have demonstrated that there are associated motor differences as a result of the sensory processing difficulties.

Morale of the story?

- Our children can & do experience faulty neuroception
- Their bodies may be triggered into dysregulation through this faulty circuitry
- How we meet our children NOW in their experience of neuroception greatly impacts our ability to coregulate with them.
- In an S2C session we cannot forget this principle of altered neuroception, despite our minds telling us old stories that what we see is our child is “misbehaving” or “not wanting to spell.”

Creating the Neuroception of SAFETY

In utero, the fetus' survival is carefully REGULATED by the mother through the umbilical cord. It delivers oxygen & nutrients, removes waste products and carbon dioxide; keeps it feeling safe, warm, secure, and life-sustained.

After birth, the baby still needs all these things, so how does it get it?



Introducing... the Interbrain

The same regulation is created through the caregiver's shared touch, gaze, voice, and emotion

This lays the deep neurological, psychological, and sensory circuitry for coregulation that evolves as your child grows.



*Uniquely
Qualified*
to be a CRP



Congratulations!
YOUR CHILD WANTS YOU!



**You're
Awesome!**



What is Co-Regulation?

- Involves a shared *present* moment
- A partner helps regulate another by responding contingently to the other person's cues
 - Babies
 - Toddlers
 - Birthday parties
- Using your grounded, calm presence and energy you help your partner feel competent, safe, & challenged by just the right amount.
- The dance! Create a rhythm or tempo with your voice and energy.

Tools for a Co-Regulated Session

- Each partner in the moment is fulfilling a competent role
 - Prep ahead of time
 - Be aware of your motor and cognitive goal for today's lesson
 - Be sure to effectively prompt your speller!
- Assess your regulation and your child's prior to starting
 - Scaling Question: Rate your readiness
 - If you're not ready, don't start session.
 - If she/he isn't ready:
 - Consider starting with purposeful motor!
 - Or start by reading together
 - Do a short breathing meditation together (can use straw to teach in/out breath, suck/blow)
 - Visualization exercise (together or just you do it)
 - Play soft classical music in the background

Other Ingredients to Successful Co-regulation

- Don't forget - Apraxia is a **brain-body disconnect**
- Presuming Competence
 - How do if I do that if I'm just *not sure*?
 - Pygmalion Effect
 - Least dangerous assumption
 - Coach the motor
 - You'll miss 100% of the shots you never take
 - Just aim for age appropriate, interesting content that you would love to share with your child.
- Put the oxygen mask on yourself first
- **Don't make spelling the goal of your S2C lesson.**

Your GOAL should be to have a positive engagement with your child and connect to one another. Spelling will be the happy byproduct of that connection

Avoiding Dysregulation

Reconsider your goals for the session. Are they the “just right” challenge?

- Motor skill goal
- Cognitive goal
- Regulation
- Stamina / Sustained Flow

Adjusting the goal to support regulation is a key intervention in S2C.

Adjust the challenge level UP (when dysregulated b/c they're bored) or DOWN (when dysregulated b/c it's too high motor/cognitive for their present level) to support regulation.



Dysregulation: What to Do *when*....

Freeze mode (dorsal vagus) *activates*...

If a speller can tolerate physical touch and especially if they are in freeze or disengagement mode:

- “I’m going to touch your arm... bring your attention to where my hand is”
- Speak slowly and rhythmically
- Repeat this (or similar action & phrase) several times to help bring them back into the awareness of their body
- Meanwhile sense your own body and create a grounded sensation in your own body

Awareness of our body helps keep us (and them) from being carried away by emotions and into faulty neuroception.

Dysregulation - fight or flight mode (sympathetic)

Fight or flight mode (sympathetic) *activates...*

First things first... get grounded:

- Breathe.
- Take one breath.
- Take a second one that is slow, deliberate.
- On the 3rd breath make your exhale longer than your inhale.
- Continue for a few more breaths until that's comfortable.

Move slowly, talk slowly (if at all). When they go UP in arousal, we go DOWN.

Try to avoid statements that are gaslighting (ex: "you're ok!" or "you're fine!")

Instead, when the time is right to speak, say things like "I can see you're body is having a hard time regulating. That's ok. You're safe. I'm here."

Dysregulation - fight or flight mode (sympathetic)

Kristin Neff and psychologist Christopher Germer created a mindful, self-compassion protocol for caregivers:

It is totally ok to pause & acknowledge quietly to yourself:

- “This is tough” or “This is a moment of suffering.”
- Give yourself grace.

DM Additions:

- Stay present; try not to future-trip.
- Monitor your self-talk / negative thoughts and try to release them as they pass through.



Beliefs vs. Facts

There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so.

William Shakespeare



Oops... You've hit Code **RED**

Take a time out. YOU take the time out, not your child!

This is not a punishment or just a time to check your phone; it's a time to focus on feeling better. Follow these steps:

- Rate your stress
- Calm your mind
- Calm your body
- Soothe yourself
- Make sense of your reaction
- Be compassionate to yourself and your child
- Take a few minutes - rate your mood again
- Set a new intention before resuming connection with your child.

© *Martha B. Straus, Cool, Calm & Connected*



More "What If?" Dysregulation Scenarios...

- Loops (4 types of motor)
 - "I don't want to spell"
 - Timer fixation
 - Impulsive standing up / leaving the room
- Feather the nest PRIOR to session
 - Use bathroom
 - Have snack
 - Stick to the plan once you go into your session as best you can
 - Focus on CONNECTION. Process over product.
- Speller not feeling 100% (tired, sluggish)?
 - Adjust the demands/expectation but still get together and connect!
- Speller not feeling well - i.e. legit sick?
 - Skip session! It's hard to be emotionally regulated when not physically regulated!



Setting Yourself Up for Success

- Clarity of purpose
 - Know your intention & goals
 - Are your self-expectations clear?
 - Are you prepared for the lesson/session? (If not - SKIP it until you have time to prepare)
- Self-check - how are **you** doing today?
- Have you put your parenting hat away?
 - Don't feather their nest
 - Just coach the motor!
- Avoid future tripping no matter what happens
- Notice your thoughts & self-talk; set aside old beliefs
- **Focus on LOVE and CONNECTION... more so than spelling.**



Questions?



EMPOWERED2

Join us for a week long program in sunny San Diego or Tampa, Florida where 15 families are immersed together in the content and hands-on practice of purposeful motor and spelling to communicate!

Contact Us Today

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Thank you!

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