Autonomic Nervous System States per Dr. Stephen Porges' Polyvagal Theory

RELAXED

Parasympathetic Nervous System **Ventral Vagal Pathway**

Characterized by: normal heart rate and muscle tone

Associated Emotions: relaxed, engaged, curious, creative, hopeful



hybrid state: quiet moments, intimacy

hybrid state: play, dance, sports, performance

IMMOBILIZED

Parasympathetic Nervous System **Dorsal Vagal Pathway**

Characterized by: low heart rate, low muscle tone, low energy

Associated Emotions when feeling safe: blissful, dreamy, tranquil, meditative Associated Emotions when feeling unsafe: depressed, unhappy, lonely, hopeless

hybrid state: freeze state of defense

MOBILIZED

Sympathetic Nervous System

Characterized by: increased heart rate, blood pressure, and hormone flow; increased muscle tone

Associated Emotions when feeling safe: energetic, active, playful, motivated

Associated Emotions when feeling unsafe: 'fight or flight,' stressed, anxious, fearful







© Polyvagal Institute 2023