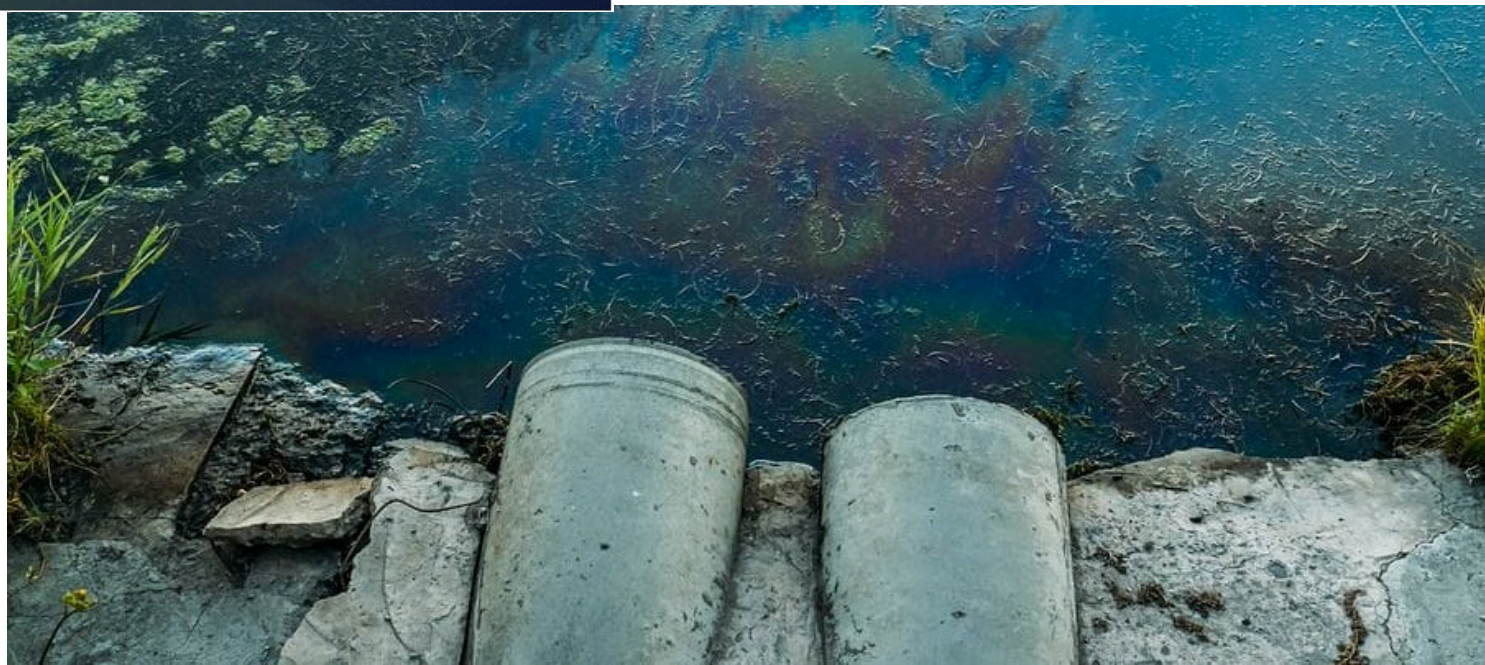


Composting Trauma and windows of tolerance



(By Mexican artist Saner Edgar)

Dharma of Resistance 2021



- Deep long breath
- Eye contact + Head movement
- Circulation to skin and hands/feet
- Good digestion + immune system
- Deep sleep

COMFORT MODE

Sense of Content

Confidence

Gratitude

Feelings of love and safety



PANIC MODE

Anxiety

Fear

Hypervigilance



PANIC MODE

Anxiety

Fear

Hypervigilance

Increases:

Heart rate

Blood pressure

Dry mouth

Pupil size

Sweating

Adrenaline

Ability to run/fight

Decreases:

Digestion (Bile, Pancreas activity)

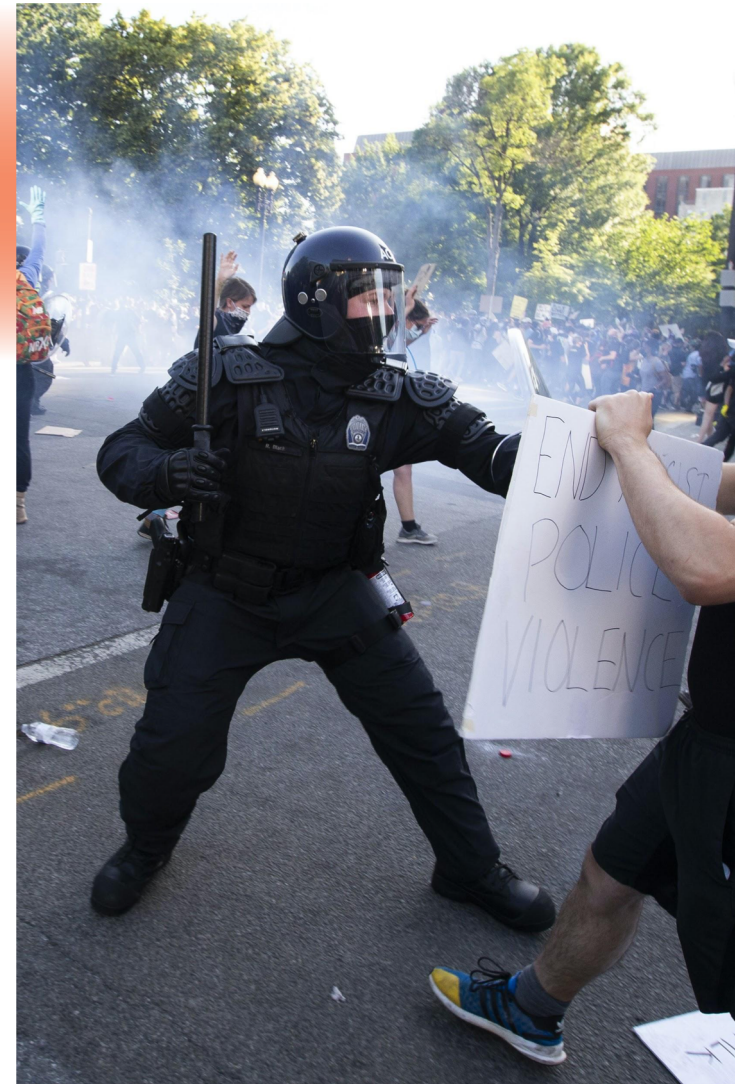
Salivation

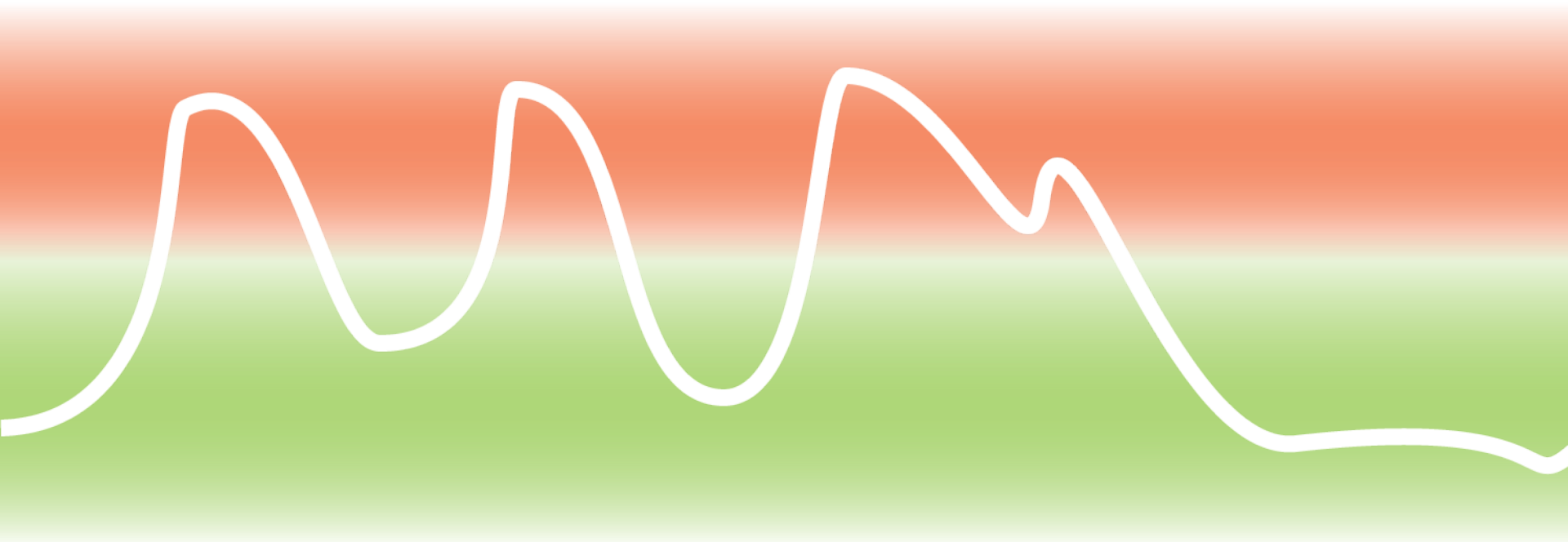
Immune response

Insulin (Glucose release)

Ability to relate

Urine (Bladder relaxation)





Increases:

Energy storage
Conservation of metabolic energy
Immobilization

Decreases:

Heart rate
Blood pressure
Temperature
Muscle tone
Eye contact
Depth of breathing
Social behavior
Sexual and immune response
Attunement to voice

Exhaustion

Depression

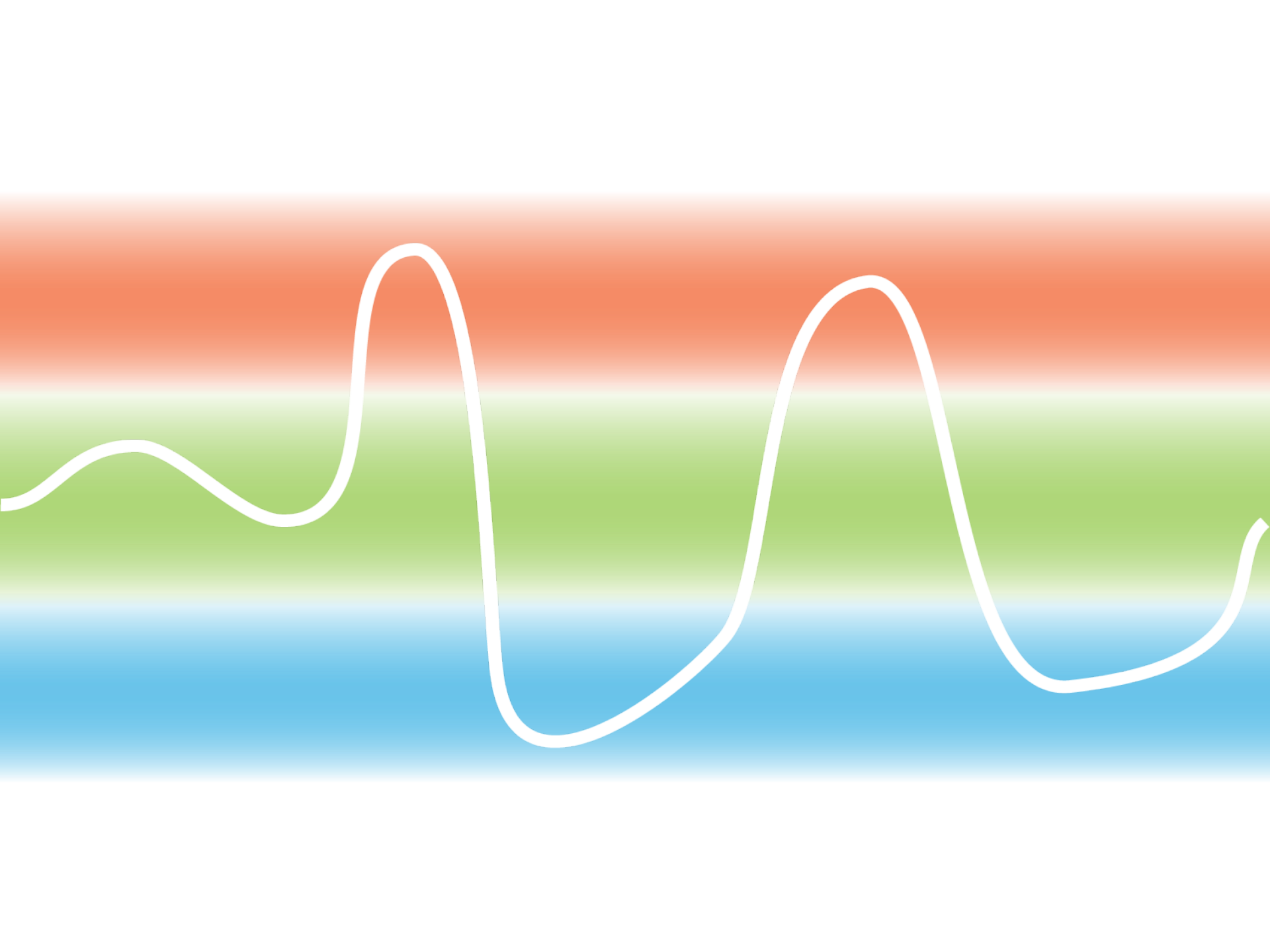
Absence of emotion

Lack of appetite

Oversleeping

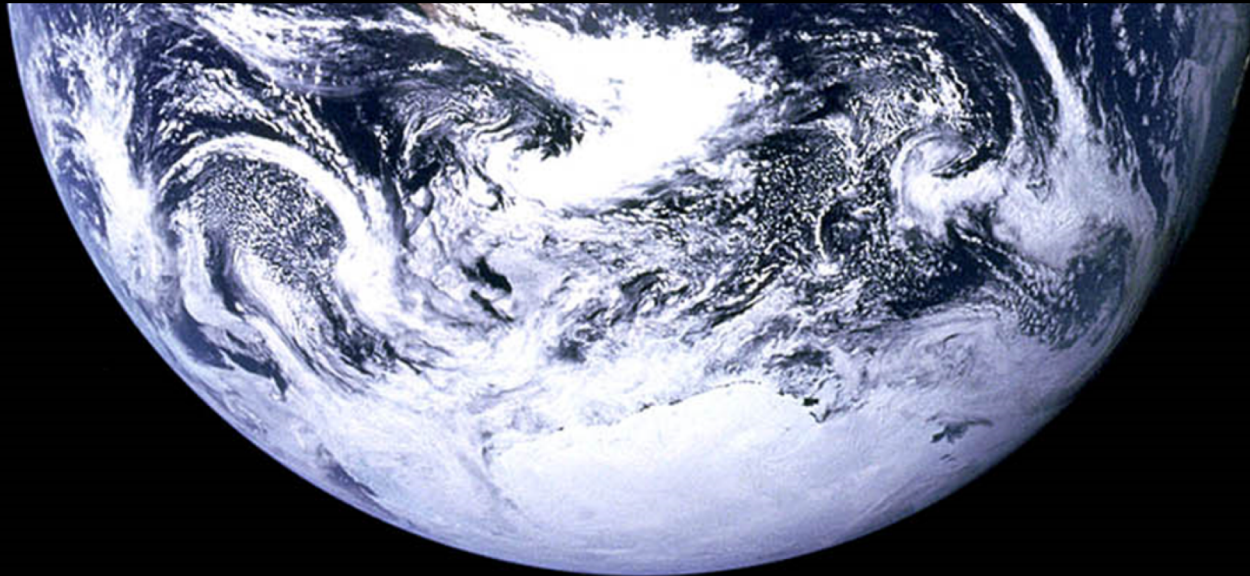
NUMBNESS MODE







Journaling



PANIC MODE

Stretch Zone

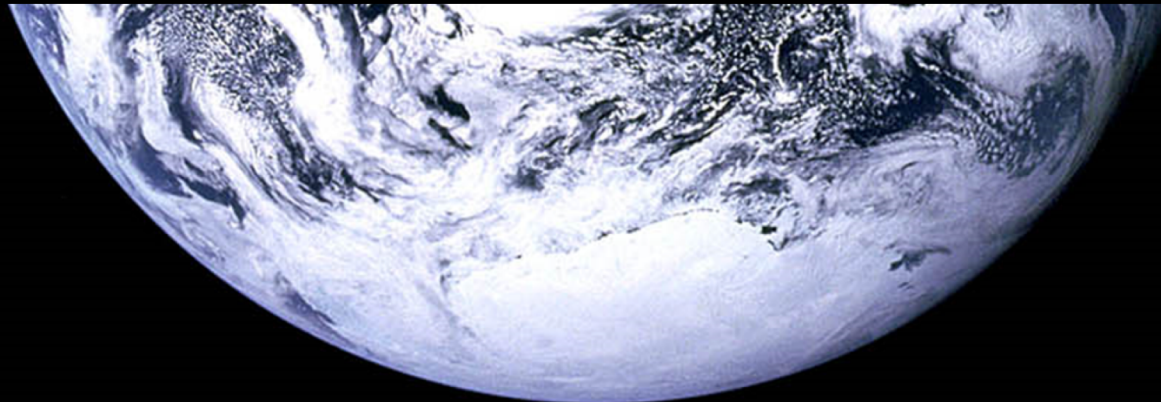
Growth Zone

COMFORT MODE



Human trauma

(Take a deep breath)



Scale of trauma

In North America:

- 1 in 3 witness domestic violence
- 1 in 4 have alcoholic relatives
- 1 in 4 beaten with marks on the body
- 1 in 5 sexually molested as a child



AND there is racial, gender-based, economic, and climate trauma

You & me. We are needed.



No group of non-traumatized people outside of us to lead the movement.

Unless resolved, it perpetuates.

1 to 1 professional psychotherapy: important but not enough.

Our communities need to have skills to face and compost trauma.

If you're suffering from climate grief, you're not alone

67% of Americans are extremely/somewhat anxious about climate.

– American Psychiatric Association, Oct 2020



SevereStudios.com / AP

an overwhelming sense of despair at the state of our planet. But how
can we channel that grief into positive action?

BY NYLAH BURTON

9 OCTOBER 2020

People of Color Experience Climate Grief More Deeply Than White People

Climate Anxiety Is an Overwhelmingly White Phenomenon

“... climate anxiety... term itself seems more applicable to folks who haven’t experienced existential threats before. Communities that have experienced ... colonialism, slavery, genocide, dispossession, medical injustice, food insecurity, pollution, exile ... tend to view climate change as just another layer of threat, compounding these other long-standing forms of oppression...”

-- Sarah Ray on her Scientific American Article

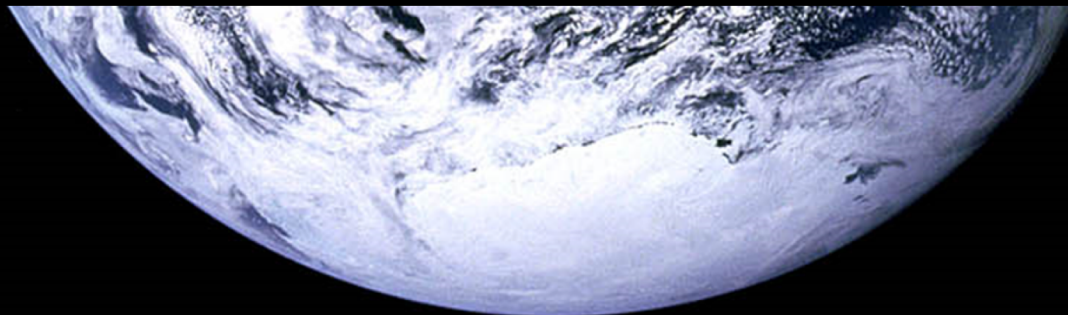
Climate crisis is slated to be the biggest threat for oppressed communities if we all don’t act radically.



Reflection

If you are white, have you felt your trauma/stress cannot be talked about when racial trauma is in the room?

If you are BIPOC, do you run into a wall when you speak about racism, wars, slavery and colonialism?



Coming back to our window of tolerance

Short-term

- Deep long abdominal exhalations (6 per minute)
- Mindfulness of calm/neutral sensations
- Singing, humming, chanting
- Foot massage
- Safe memories
- Social connection + Laughter

Long term

- Yoga and meditation retreats
- Trauma therapies (EMDR, IFS, Brain spotting, SE)
- Community grief work
- Developing trusting relationships = vulnerability
- Healthy diet



“Climate anxiety without justice is a gateway to ecofascism.

Our job, as the climate anxious, is to repair that oppression, repair that marginalization, to make sure you’re not offloading your anxiety onto someone else in ways that are causing more harm.”

- Dr. Eric Holthaus

The question is not what privileged people deserve but what do they need to grieve!

How will we create conditions where we can see each other’s trauma?

Trauma/shame + fear of uncertainty

= Fight, flight and freeze mind

= Dominance instead of connection

= Engine of oppression

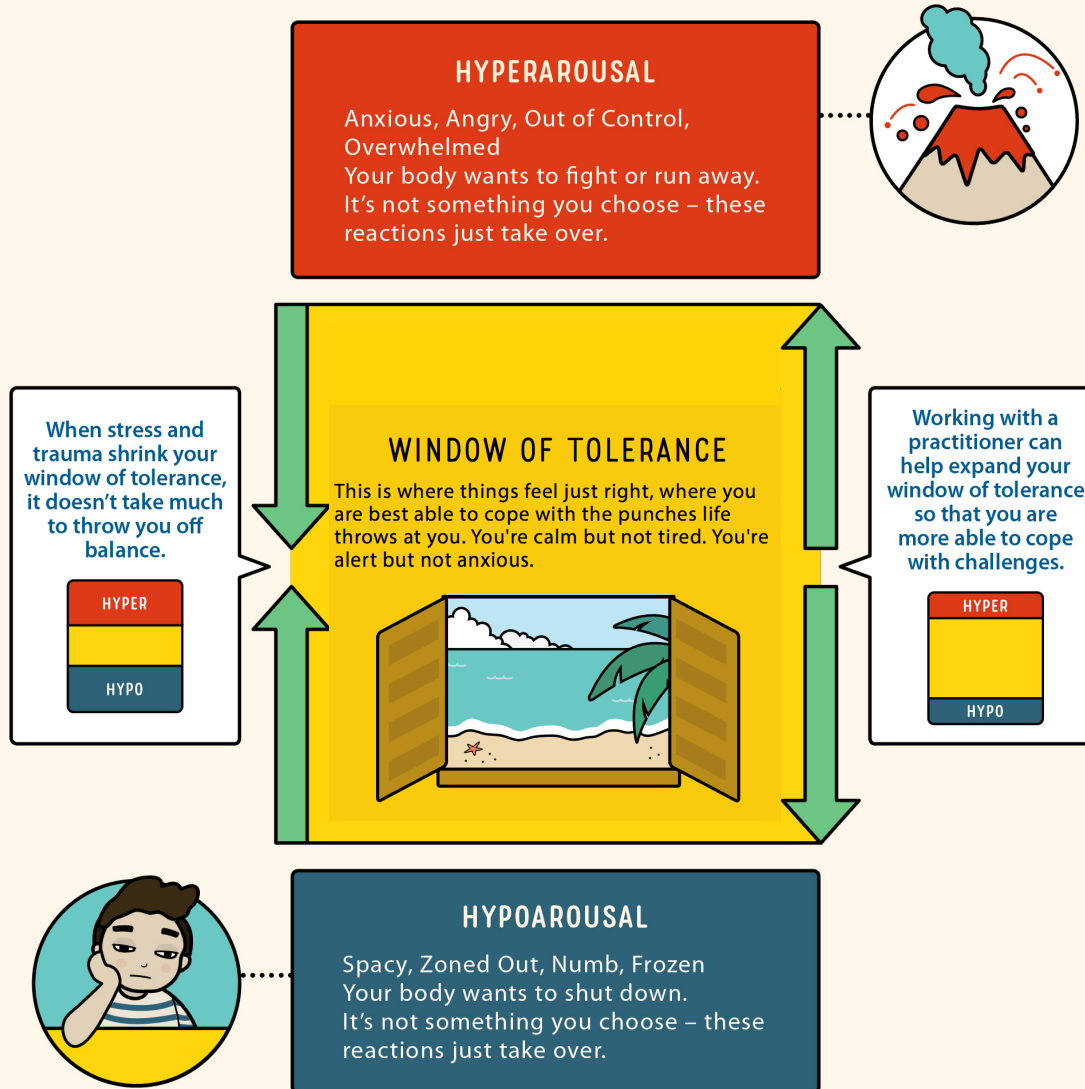
...that further traumatizes us

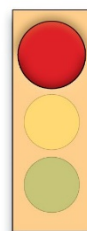
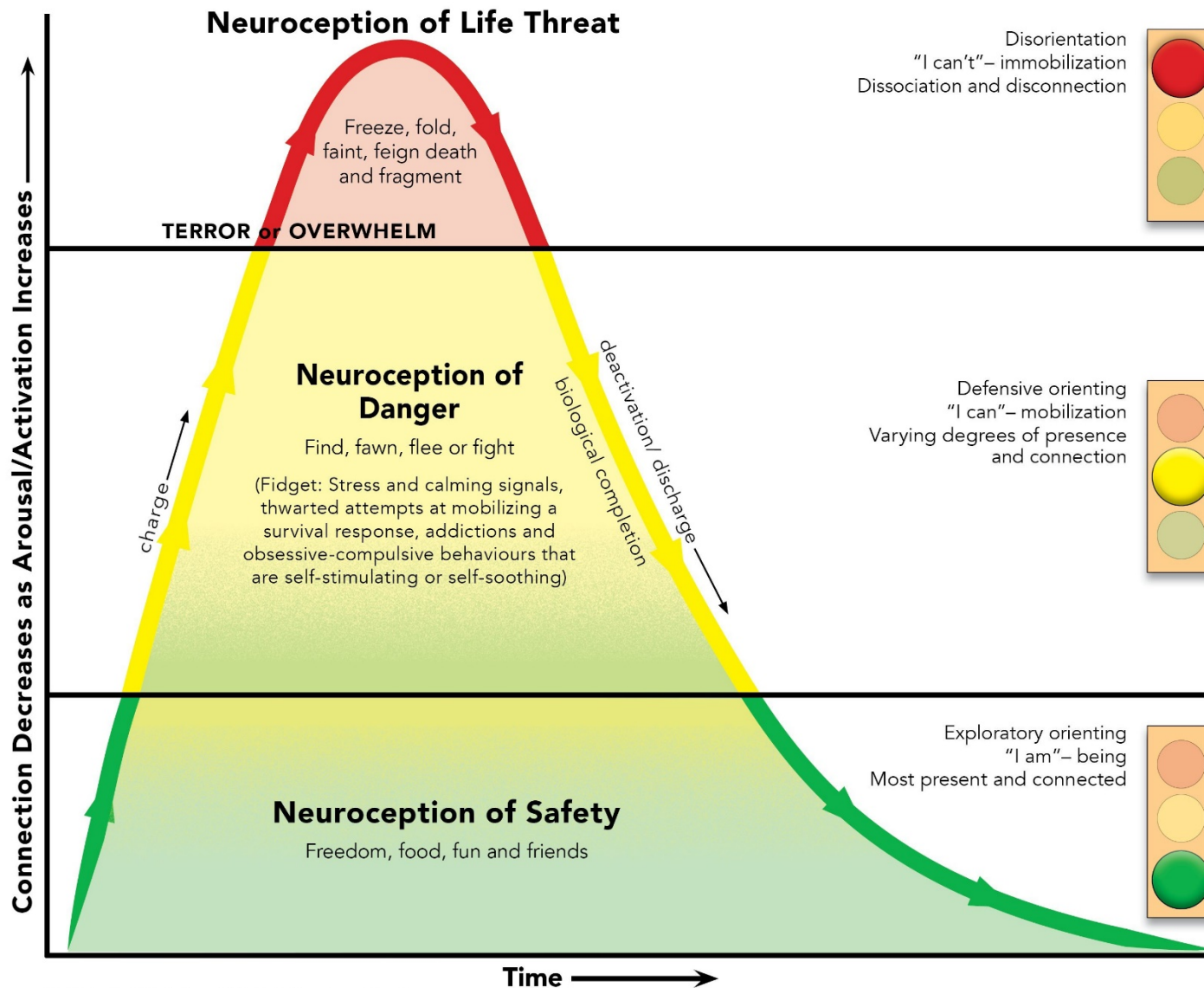
Conflict within team

- Importance of coming back to window of tolerance



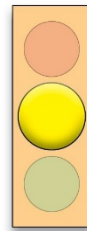
How Trauma Can Affect Your Window Of Tolerance





**Parasympathetic Nervous System
Brake System: Dorsal Vagal Dominance (high)**

When the other strategies are not possible or successful, the body enters a state of energy conservation involving tonic (rigid) immobility or collapsed (floppy) immobility. This state is characterized by learned helplessness, shame, shutdown, numbing, depletion of life energy, derealization, depersonalization, personality fragmentation, altered states of consciousness, or loss of consciousness.



**Sympathetic Nervous System
Gas Pedal: Sympathetic Dominance**

Low to moderate amounts of arousal or stress, especially when accompanied by the social engagement system, can be tolerated. These states are enjoyable or invigorating and are not necessarily a sign of danger (shaded area). As a sense of danger or distress increases, the hierarchy of responses begins to mobilize:

- **Find:** AKA "tend and befriend", looking to the help of attachment figures for comfort, soothing, protection (attachment cry, proximity seeking, clinging, cohesion, bunching, protesting separation)
- **Fawn:** Appeasement behaviours to defuse confrontation and decrease likelihood of harm, pain or punishment (reasoning, complying, placating, peace keeping, ingratiation, codependency, Stockholm syndrome, etc.)
- **Flee:** Wariness, nervousness, anxiety, panic; avoidance (ignoring, moving away, away-from marching, running, stampeding)
- **Fight:** Irritability, frustration, anger, rage; resistance (staring, intimidating, aggression, defending, protesting)



**Parasympathetic Nervous System
Brake System: Ventral Vagal Dominance (social engagement) or Dorsal Vagal Dominance (low rest and digest)**

These states are the most conducive to relationships, emotional repair (emotional and physical) and restoration. The feeling of safety supports sleeping, reading, meditation, practicing, as well as healthy social interactions, exploring, learning, procreation, and play. The more active states involve a degree of tolerable or pleasurable sympathetic arousal (shaded area).

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Adapted from Porges (2011, 2017), Levine (1997, 2010), Walker (2013), Hoskinson Consulting (n.d.), Draaisma (2018), Rees (2018), Schauer & Elbert (2010), Koslowska et al. (2015), and Payne & Crane-Godreau (2015).

l soil building,
thic spaces

cial healing, Wealth
ghts of nature

Social engagement

Individuali
Neoliberal econor
Speciesism, Pa
Classism

Grief work,
Deep breathing

Early loss, neglect
& maladjustments

Anxiety & avoidance
(Fight and flight mode)

Expressing
vulnerability,
EMDR, IFS

Isolation,
secrecy
& judgment

Trauma/Shame

Slowing down,
sensory awareness

Severe trauma
(War, rape, abuse)

Inability to feel emotions
(Freeze mode, denial & disassociation)



The 4 Responses to Fear



Fight

Action: **Attack**
Emotion: **Anger**
Outcomes: **Insult, Blame, Mistreat**

engage

Face



Action: **Defend**
Emotion: **Connected**
Outcomes: **Preserve and Mitigate**

repel



Flight

Action: **Hide**
Emotion: **Denial**
Outcomes: **Avoid, Omit, Sabotage**

disengage

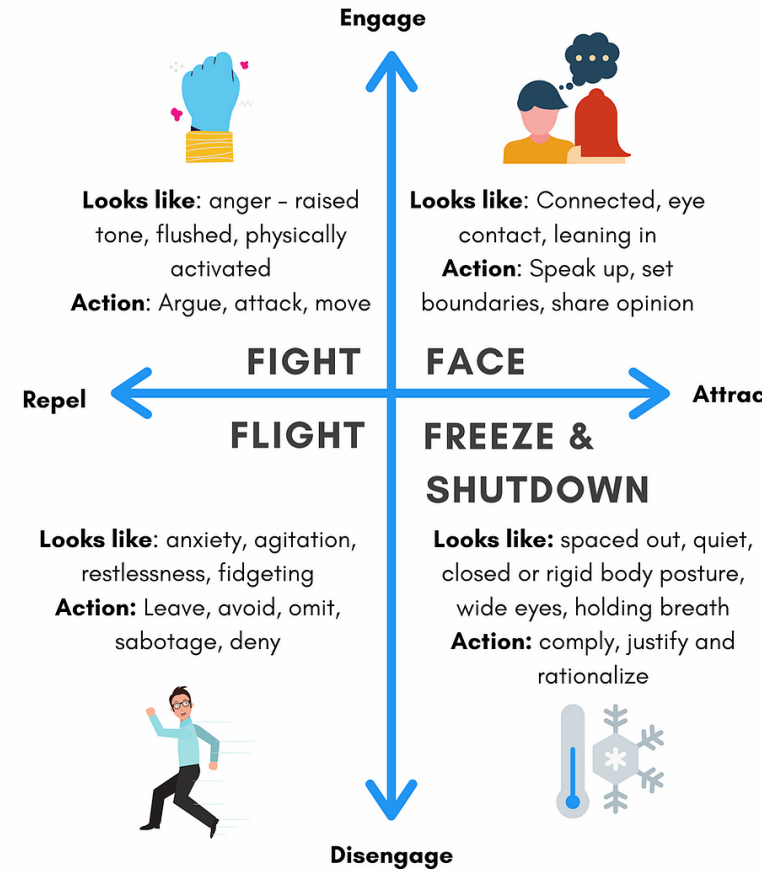
Freeze

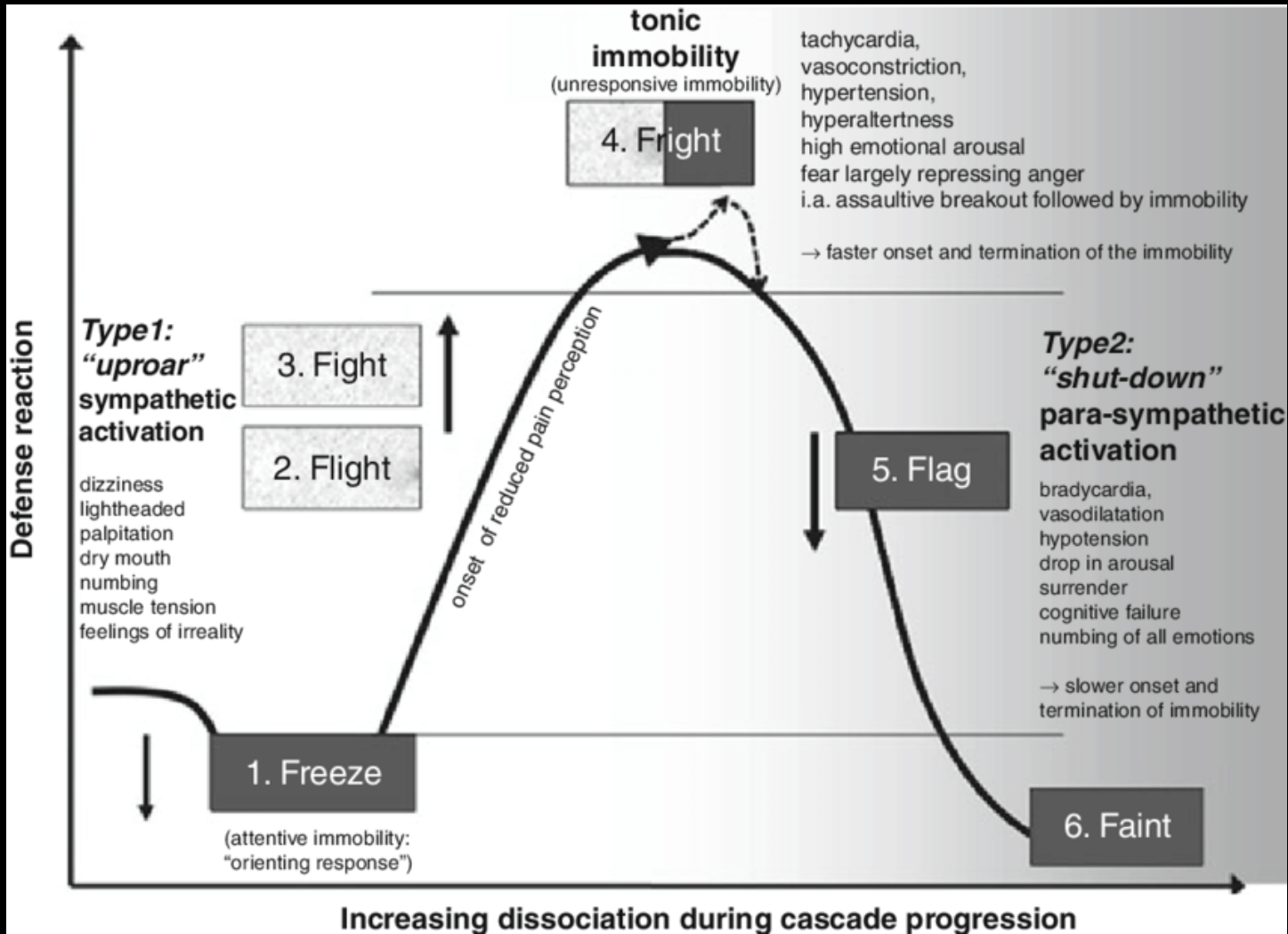


Action: **Comply**
Emotion: **Shut Down**
Outcomes: **Justify and Rationalize**

4 Responses To Threat

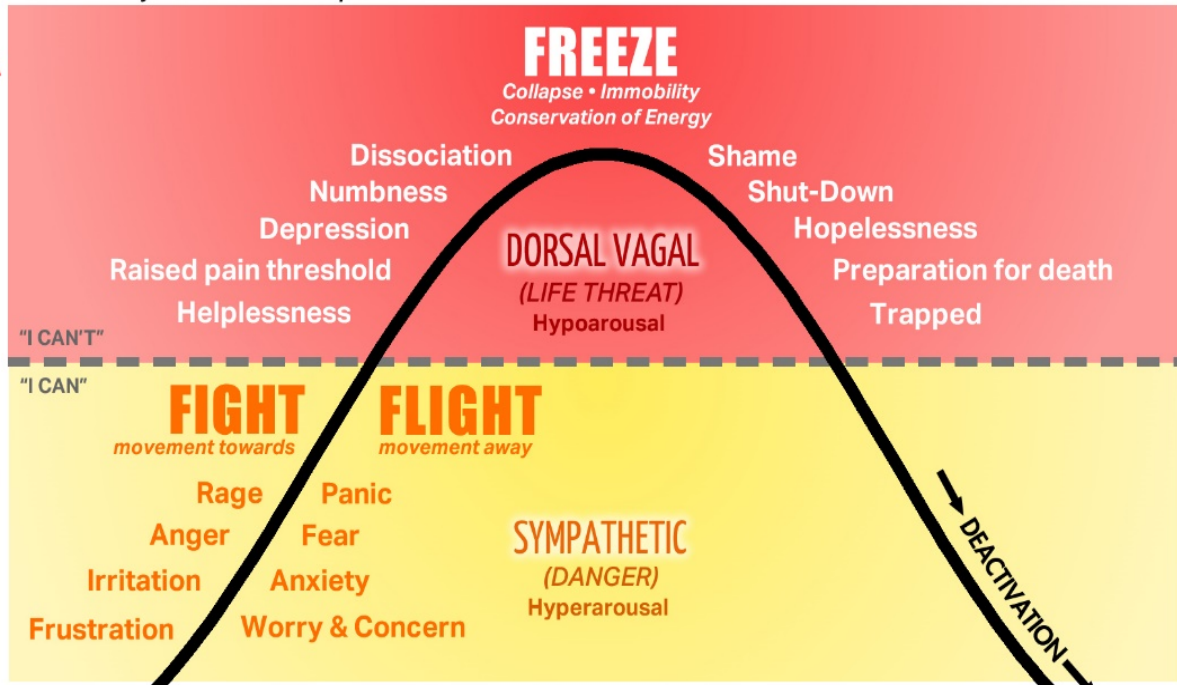
Audrey Batterham





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

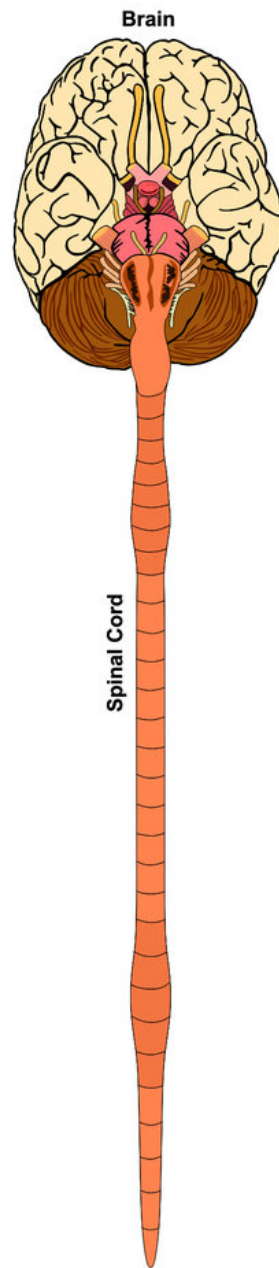
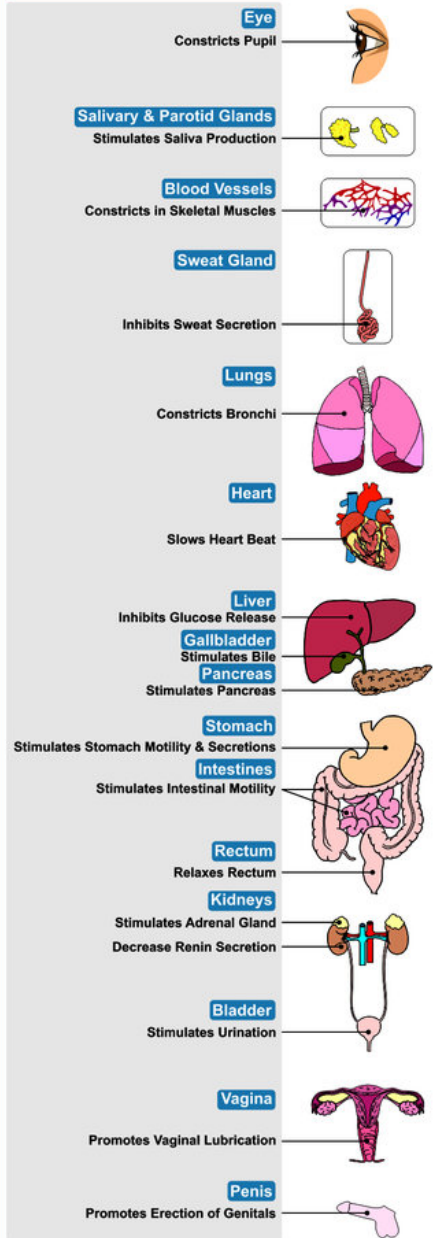
Decreases

Defensive Responses

VVC is the beginning and end of stress response.

When VVC is dominant, SNS and DVC are in transient blends which promote healthy physiological functioning.

PARASYMPATHETIC



SYMPATHETIC

