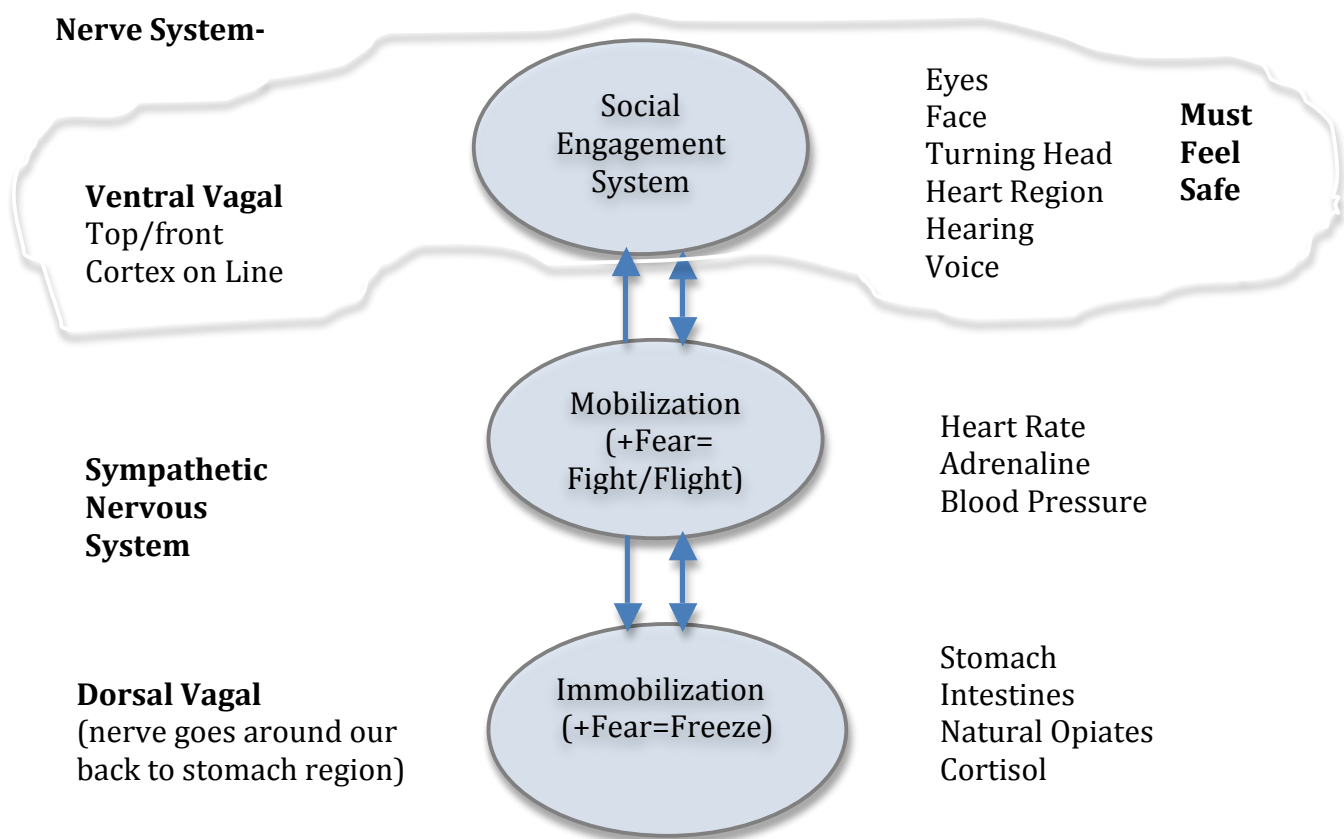


Quick Overview of Our Nervous System

This Information is a simplification of some of the work of Stephen Porges: “The PolyVagal Theory” (2011) The sense of this diagram was especially taken from pages 15-19 and page 278.

1. Our nervous system is always scanning for danger, **mostly that scanning is unconscious.**
2. To engage in social behaviors and activate the social engagement system, a person must **feel safe** at a deep level in their nervous system.
3. Social Engagement System allows social behavior and aids regulation of emotion and regulation of heart rhythms and breathing. Ideally this is the normal state for most of our social life.
4. If we don't feel safe (at a very gut-level) our body engages systems that allow for facing danger (fight/flight or if “no-escape”, then freeze). **When facing danger some of our thinking brain goes off line and we become less sociable.** This allows more energy to fight/flee or freeze.

Nerve System-



For most of us our nervous systems operate with a mix of social engagement, mobilization, and sometimes immobilization. The presence of fear can quickly engage fight/flight or freeze.

1. The Freeze Response is “Immobilization with Fear” (pp. 16-19). It's possible to have Immobilization (or movement reduction) without fear *plus* social engagement—that's related to strong pair bonding like nursing or sex. Sleeping engages the immobilization system.
2. Play is the blending of Mobilization and Social Engagement (p. 278)
3. If we've experienced trauma or had early caregivers who were not emotionally available or not consistent in providing us with a *felt sense* of safety, our sense of safety can get skewed, and we might need some help re-training our nervous system so we feel safe in our bodies when it's appropriate and feel frightened when it's appropriate.