

Polyvagal Mapping & Nervous System Regulation Worksheet

This worksheet helps you identify where your nervous system spends time and what helps you move toward safety and regulation.

Part 1: Understanding the Nervous System Ladder

Our nervous system moves through **three main states**. These are not good or bad — they are survival responses.

- **Ventral Vagal (Safe & Connected)** – calm, present, open
- **Sympathetic (Fight / Flight)** – anxious, angry, driven, overwhelmed
- **Dorsal Vagal (Shutdown / Freeze)** – numb, disconnected, exhausted

You can move **up and down the ladder throughout the day**.

Part 2: Where Do You Land Most Often?

Check any that apply. There may be more than one.

☐ **Ventral Vagal – Safety & Connection**

When I am here, I notice: - ☐ Calm or steady mood - ☐ Ability to think clearly - ☐ Feeling connected to others - ☐ Emotional balance - ☐ Curiosity or motivation

Body signals I notice:

☐ **Sympathetic – Fight / Flight**

When I am here, I notice: - ☐ Anxiety or panic - ☐ Irritability or anger - ☐ Racing thoughts - ☐ Restlessness or urgency - ☐ Trouble sleeping

Body signals I notice:

☐ Dorsal Vagal – Shutdown / Freeze

When I am here, I notice: - ☐ Numbness or emptiness - ☐ Low energy or exhaustion - ☐ Withdrawal or isolation - ☐ Hopelessness - ☐ Difficulty caring or feeling motivated

Body signals I notice:

Part 3: Early Warning Signs

How do you know you are starting to move out of safety?

Thoughts I notice:

Body sensations I notice:

Behaviours I notice:

Part 4: Regulation Tools by Nervous System State

☒ When You Are in Sympathetic (Too Much Energy)

Goal: slow down and create safety

Try 1–2 of the following: - ☐ Slow breathing (inhale 4, exhale 6) - ☐ Grounding: name 5 things you see, 4 you feel, 3 you hear - ☐ Press feet into the floor and notice support - ☐ Stretch neck, jaw, shoulders - ☐ Cold water on face or wrists - ☐ Walk slowly while noticing surroundings

Tools that help me most:

☐ When You Are in Dorsal Vagal (Too Little Energy)

Goal: gently add energy and connection

Try 1–2 of the following: - ☐ Gentle movement (stretching, rocking, swaying) - ☐ Warm drink or blanket - ☐ Step outside for fresh air - ☐ Listen to comforting music - ☐ Sit near someone or a pet - ☐ Name objects in the room out loud

Tools that help me most:

When You Are in Ventral Vagal (Regulated)

Goal: maintain and strengthen safety

Ways to support this state: - ☐ Meaningful connection (text, call, eye contact) - ☐ Creative activity - ☐
Mindfulness or meditation - ☐ Light movement or exercise - ☐ Time in nature - ☐ Reflection or journaling

What helps me stay here:

Part 5: Your Personal Regulation Plan

When I notice early signs of dysregulation, I will:

1.

2.

3.

People, places, or activities that increase safety for me:

Important Reminders

- You are not broken — your nervous system is protective.
- Regulation is about *support*, not control.
- Small, consistent practices matter more than forcing calm.
- You don't have to return to calm — just move one step toward safety.

Use this worksheet with your therapist and revisit it as your awareness grows.