

Nervous System Symptoms of Regulation and Dys-regulation

All symptoms of dys-regulation arise out of perceptions of the events in our lives. When we change our perceptions, we change the symptoms in our nervous system. It is wise to master the art of how to change our perceptions and how to manage the symptoms that arise in our bodies to help return us to a more regulated/ventral state.

Sympathetic Response- Freeze, Flight, Fight Hyper-arousal Symptoms

Perceptions of Threat/Challenge

Hyper-alert
Hyper-vigilant
Increased heart rate
Defensive
“Pounding” sensation in the head
Anxious
Excessive Motoric Activity
Overwhelmed, Disorganized
Highly irritable
Uncontrollable bouts of rage
Aggressive
Dissociation

Parasympathetic/Ventral Vagal Response- Regulated Symptoms (Mindful/“Attached to Self”)

Neuroception of Safety

Think logically/clearly
Able to make conscious choices
Able to make eye contact
Display a wide range of emotional expression
Feel “grounded”
Able to notice breath
Poised
Internal awareness of both mind and body
“In the body”
Able to communicate verbally in a clear manner

Parasympathetic/Dorsal Vagal Response- Collapse, Immobilization, Hypo-arousal Symptoms

Perceptions of Threat/Challenge

Helplessness
Appear life-less
Non-expressive
Numbing
Lack of motivation
Lethargic/Tired
Dulled capacity to feel significant events
Emotional constriction
Depression
Isolation
Dissociation

Synergetic Play Therapy™ - Regulation Activities

Listed below are just some examples of activities that can be used to help regulate a dys-regulated nervous system. It is wise to do these activities pro-actively, as well as in moments of dys-regulation. It is also important to follow the body's innate wisdom back to a regulated/ventral state. These activities are important to be done alone AND with someone.

- Run, jump, spin, dance with pauses to take deep breaths- you can make a game and have child jump high to touch something high on a wall or in a door frame
- Run, jump, etc and crash into something soft (i.e jump on a bed and crash repeatedly)
- Bounce on a yoga ball
- Roll across the floor back and forth
- Sit in a chair and push up with your arms (as if trying to get out of the chair)...keep some resistance
- Massages
- Deep pressure on arms and legs (you can slowly apply pressure down arms and legs in a long stroking motion)
- Eat (particularly something crunchy)
- Drink through a straw
- Take a bath or shower
- Wrap up in a blanket and snuggle (a little tightly for some pressure)- of course, do this safely.
- March or sing during transitions
- Play Mozart music in the background during challenging times of the day if in hyper-arousal
- Play Hard Rock/Fast/Bass music if in hypo-arousal
- Carry heavy things or push heavy things around
- Do isometrics (wall pushups or push hands together (looks like you are praying))
- Walk quickly
- Run up and down steps
- Shake head quickly
- Hang upside down off of a bed or couch
- Play sports
- "Doodle" on paper (this one can be a bit more distracting, but sometimes works)
- Hold or fidget a Koosh ball, rubber band, straw, clay
- Rub gently or vigorously on your skin or clothing
- Put a cold or hot wash cloth on face
- Dim the lights if in hyper-arousal
- Turn on the lights if in hypo-arousal
- Read a book
- Swing
- Learn about "Brain Gym"- tons of ideas
- Yoga
- Snuggle
- Dance
- Move, move, move- any way that it feels good to your body
- Describe what is happening in your body out loud- "My tummy is going in circles", "My legs feel heavy", etc...
- Breathe, breathe, breathe- make sure that your inhalation is the same length as your exhalation-