The DECC

Riverbanks of Regulation

Action for Children

Based on concepts from Polyvagal Theory (Porges, 2011) and the Window of Tolerance model (Siegel, 1999)

Moving out of regulation into sympathetic or dorsal survival is not the problem, it is normal and helpful. It is only when get stuck there that we suffer. Wellbeing comes from a nervous system that can move out of ventral regulation and also find the way back (Dana, 2024).

Reactive River

Narrow Banks, Prone to Overflow or Collapse

Resilient River

Wide Banks, Able to Hold Stress Safely

Ventral Vagal

Safe / Regulated

Optimal Arousal

‘I am steady for now, but it doesn’t take much to unsettle me.’





‘I am grounded and able to stay steady even when life moves around me.’

Sympathetic

Fight / Flight / Fawn

Hyper-Arousal

‘I am overwhelmed quickly, flooded with urgency, and struggling to stay in control.’





‘I am activated, but I still have room to cope, think, and choose my response.’

Dorsal Vagal

Fawn / Freeze / Flop

Hypo-Arousal

‘I am shutting down fast, disappearing inside because everything feels too much.’





‘I am slowing and withdrawing, but I’m not lost - I can still find my way back.’

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