

# *Polyvagal Theory*

When our neuroception detects safety, our body continues to be regulated by **ventral vagal** pathways: allowing for connection and social engagement.

When our neuroception signals threat, our neural platform shifts to a **sympathetic** response which prepares our body for an active response. If the threat persists, our neural platform shifts again and becomes regulated by our **dorsal vagal** pathways which respond to life threat by collapse and shutdown.

The shifts in neural platform are sequential-like walking down a flight of stairs. It is important to think of the experiences that put us in danger of "falling down" the stairs of our autonomic nervous system and the tools we will need to "walk back up" to feelings of safety and connection.

**SAFETY**  
Social  
Engagement  
Ventral Vagal

**DANGER**  
Hyperarousal  
Sympathetic Activation

**LIFE THREAT**  
Hypoarousal  
Parasympathetic  
Dorsal Vagal