



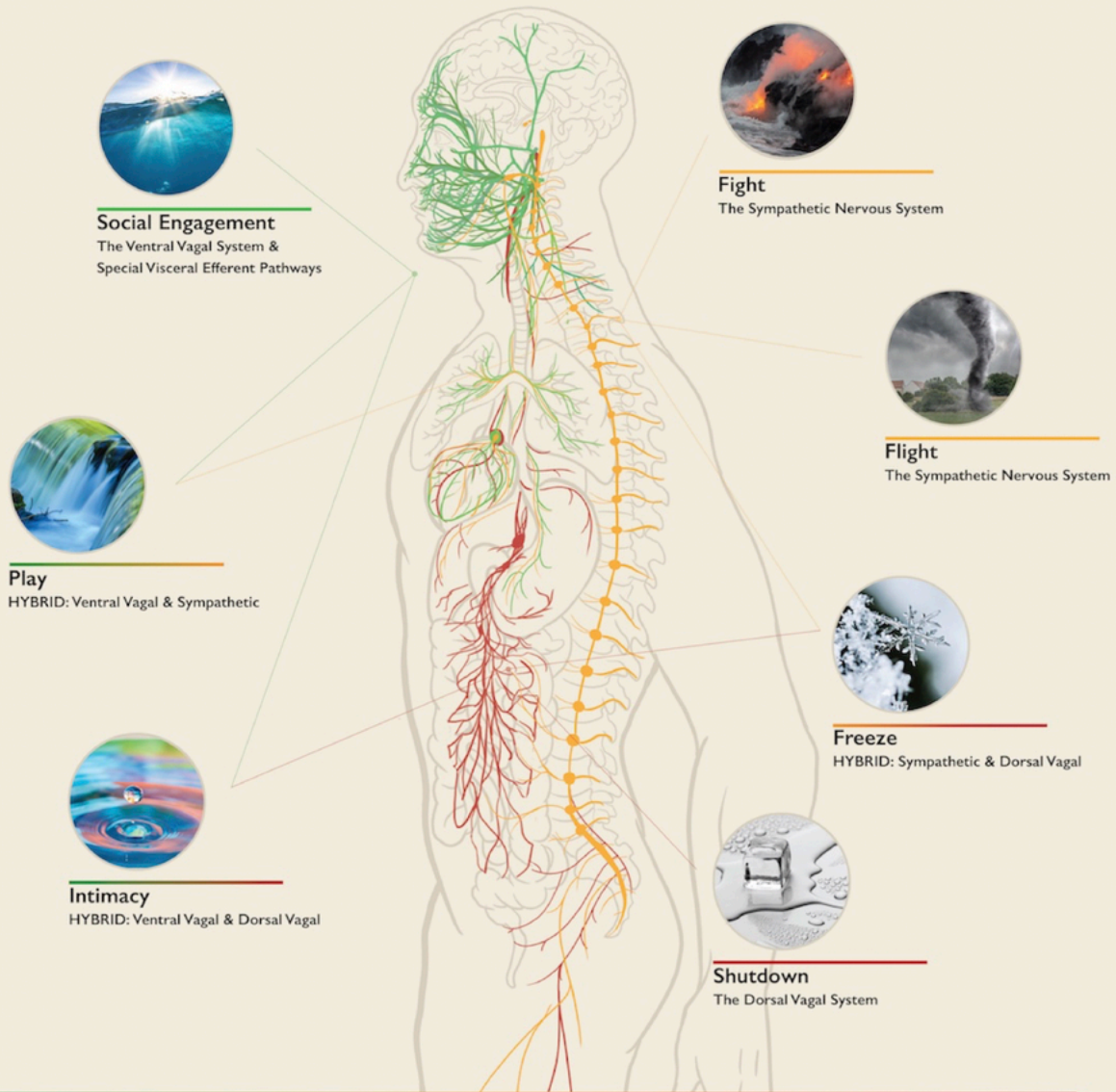
# POLYVAGAL THEORY

The Polyvagal Theory explains the relationship between the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) and social behavior. The ANS is the neurological architecture of the mind-body connection. It regulates our internal milieu and assesses safety or threat internally, in our relationships, and in our environment. This ability to detect degrees of safety is known as neuroception. Neuroception selectively engages specific neural circuits (Ventral Vagal, Sympathetic, Dorsal Vagal) that shift depending on whether we feel safe, in danger, or under life threat. The Polyvagal Theory maps these circuits and the ways they combine into neural platforms of behavior. It affirms that human well-being is largely social in nature.

Ventral Vagal (safety)

Sympathetic (danger)

Dorsal Vagal (life threat)



The neural platforms of behavior depicted above shape our physiological state (heart rate, breathing, arousal), how we experience ourselves, what we feel and think, how we interpret the world, and our behavior. Neural platforms represent different physiological states that filter and shape our reality by influencing and at times distorting our experiences, perceptions, and how we act. When we experience safety, we see, hear, and feel different things than when we experience threat. In this way, the neural platforms shape our experience of reality.

