

The Nervous System and Resilience – Working with Stress and Burnout

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**Mental
Wellness
Initiative**



Welcome & Intention Setting

Welcome to this sacred space of reconnection and inner safety.

Empowering trauma-informed healing through body-based practices

Intention for today:

“To slow down, listen deeply, and honour the body’s capacity to regulate and restore.”

You are not here to be fixed — but to remember that your body is wise, resilient, and capable of healing.



Understanding the Nervous System

The Nervous System is our body's internal communication network. It regulates everything from digestion to emotional response.

3 Key Divisions:

- Central Nervous System (CNS) – brain & spinal cord
- Peripheral Nervous System (PNS) – all nerves outside the brain/spine
- Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) – regulates involuntary responses



The Autonomic Nervous System (ANS)

The ANS keeps us alive and safe. It works mostly outside of our conscious control.

Subdivisions:

- **Sympathetic Nervous System** (SNS) = “Fight or Flight”
 - **Parasympathetic Nervous System** (PNS) = “Rest and Digest”
 - **Enteric Nervous System** (ENS) = “Second brain” in the gut
- 🧠 This system constantly scans for safety or danger (neuroception).



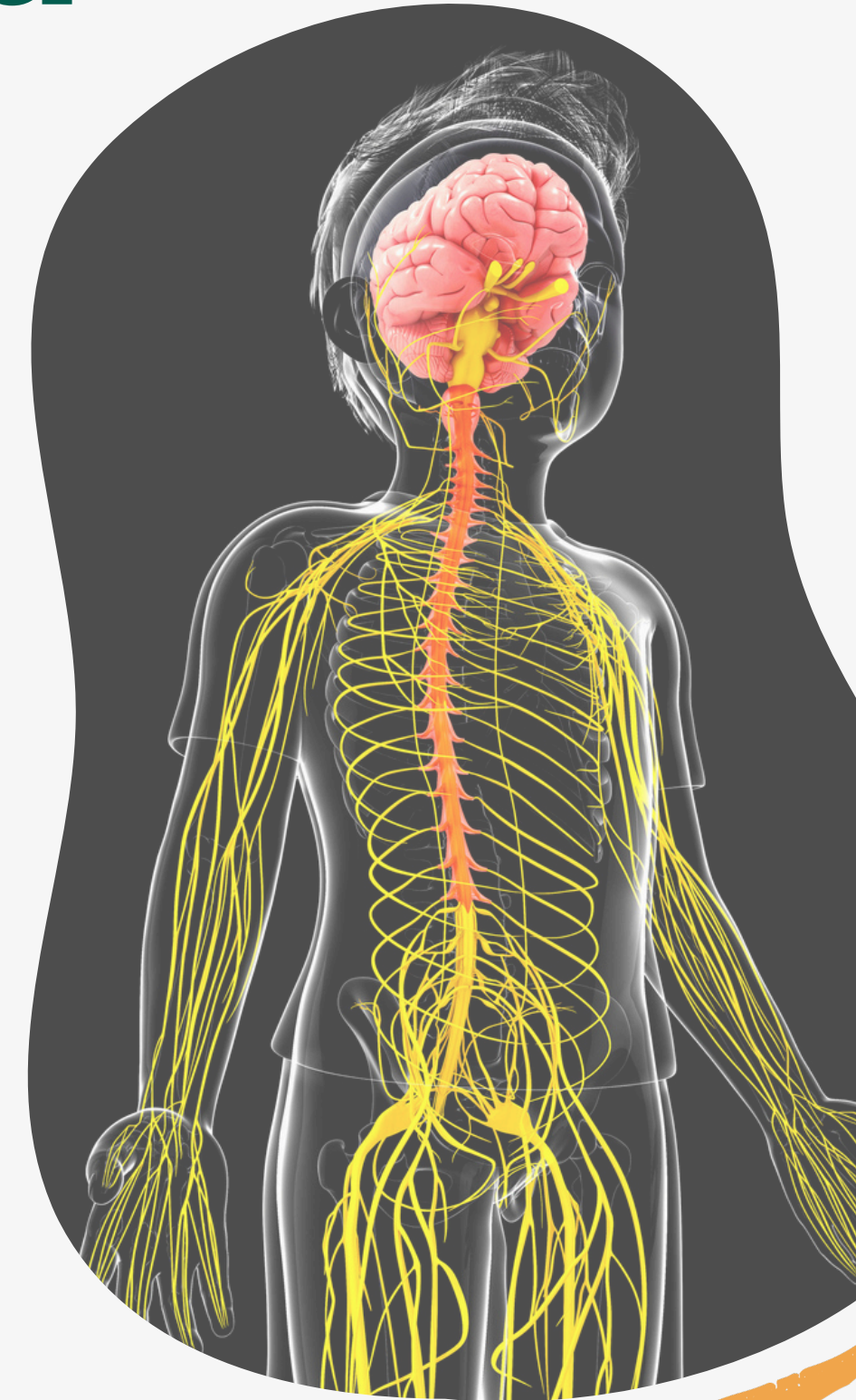
Polyvagal Theory Simplified

Developed by Dr. Stephen Porges, Polyvagal Theory explains how the ANS supports our survival.

3 States of the Vagus Nerve Pathways:

- Ventral Vagal (safe/social): Calm, curious, connected
- Sympathetic (mobilization): Fight/flight response
- Dorsal Vagal (shutdown): Freeze, numbness, dissociation

“Your nervous system is listening for cues of safety or danger — even before your brain knows it.” – Dr. Porges





Signs of Nervous System Dysregulation

When the nervous system is out of balance, it impacts the entire body.

Common signs of dysregulation:

- Exhaustion, insomnia
- Anxiety, irritability
- Digestive issues
- Brain fog or dissociation
- Burnout



 **Burnout is not a weakness — it's your body asking for restoration.**



What is Burnout?

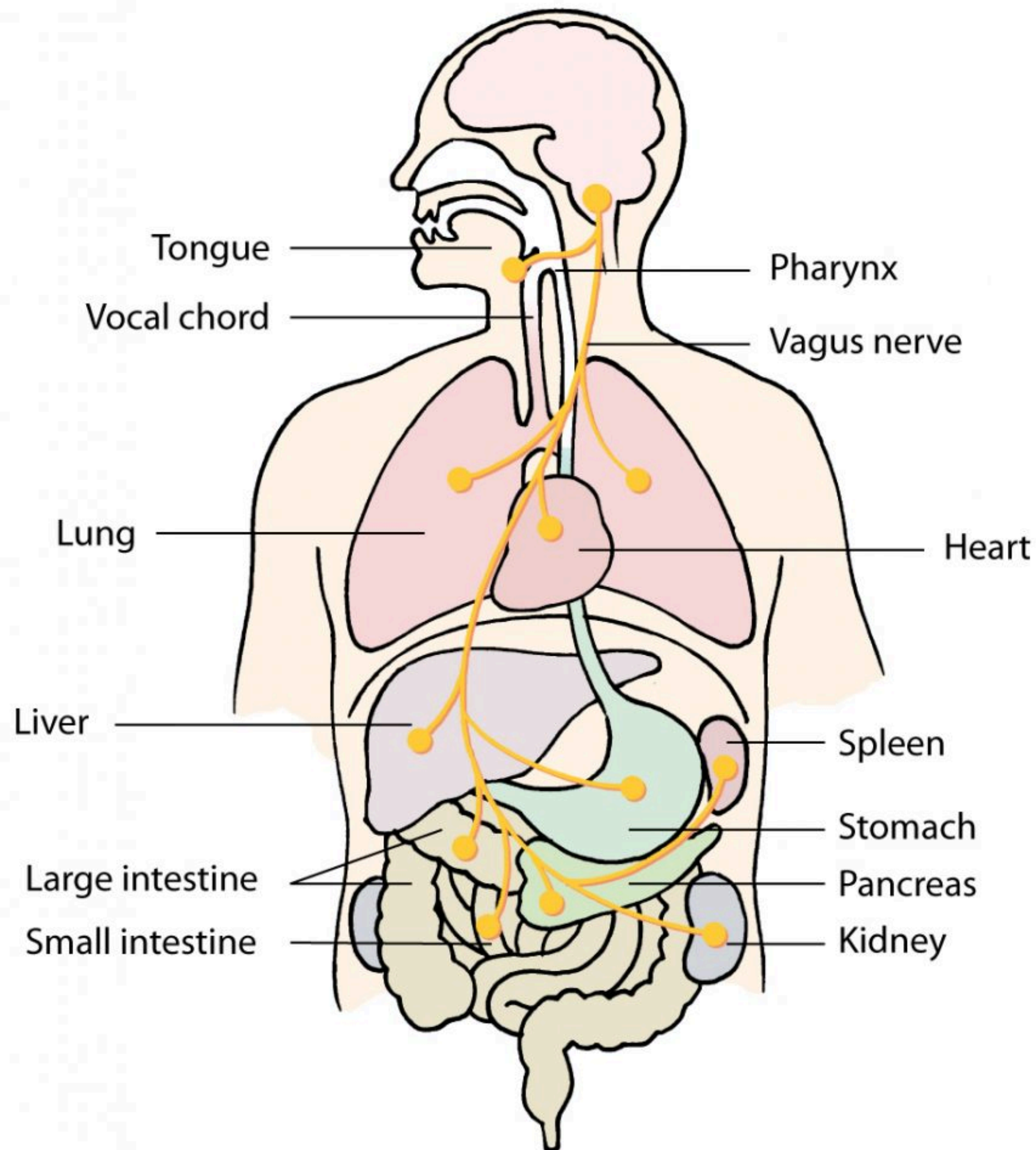
Burnout is a nervous system collapse — not a mental failure.

It's the result of prolonged stress without adequate recovery.

Stages of Burnout:

1. Overwhelm
2. Exhaustion
3. Detachment/Shutdown

Core need: Re-regulation and reconnection with self.



Meet the Vagus Nerve

The Vagus Nerve is the main component of the parasympathetic system.

- It connects the brain, heart, lungs, and gut.
- It helps regulate breathing, digestion, and emotional regulation.
- 80% of vagus nerve signals go from the body to the brain.

Building vagal tone = building resilience.



Exercises to Activate the Vagus Nerve

1. **Vocal Toning:**

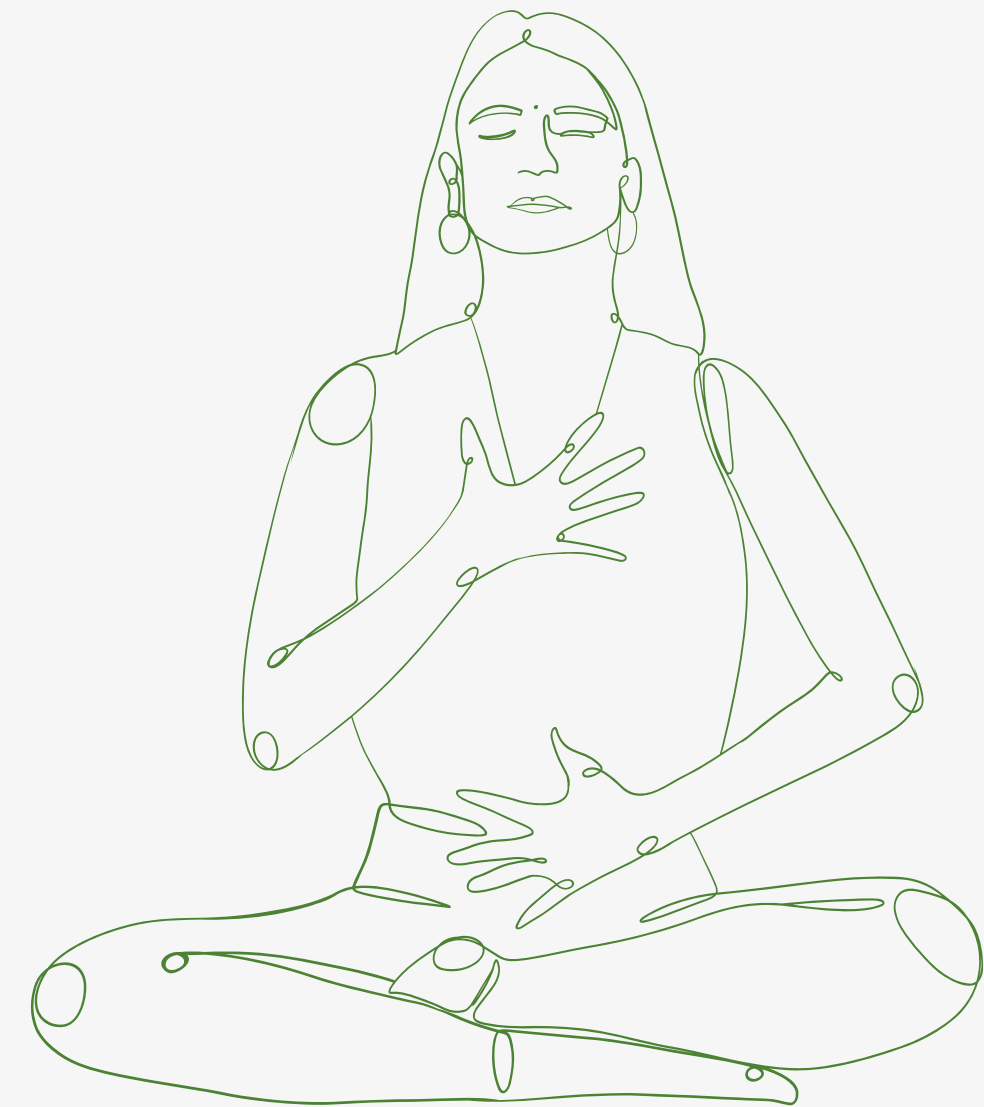
Hum “OM” or “mmm” — feel the vibration in your chest/face

2. **4-2-6 Breath:**

Inhale 4 sec → Hold 2 sec → Exhale 6 sec
Repeat 4-6 rounds

3. **Gentle Touch:**

Hand on heart or belly — say: “I’m safe now.”





Exercises to Activate the Vagus Nerve

Practical exercise – Eye movement



Somatic Tools for Regulation

Orienting:

- Notice 3 things around you (color, texture, shape)

Butterfly Hug:

- Cross arms and tap shoulders, left–right rhythm

Grounding Through Feet:

- Feel the floor, press your feet down, breathe

Titration:

- Touch stress gently → shift to a soothing cue





The Body Remembers

- 🌱 Trauma lives in the body — so does healing.
- By working with our nervous system, we create new neural pathways for safety, ease, and regulation.
- Healing is not linear, but it is possible.
- You are allowed to rest. You are allowed to feel.





Journal prompts:



- What helps me feel safe?
- Where in my body do I feel stress or calm?
- What small practice can I commit to today?

Affirmation:

“I am allowed to feel. I am worthy of safety.”



Thank You

**You've just taken a brave step in
reconnecting with your body's wisdom.**



Please share your reflections on key takeaways and set an intention for your well-being.

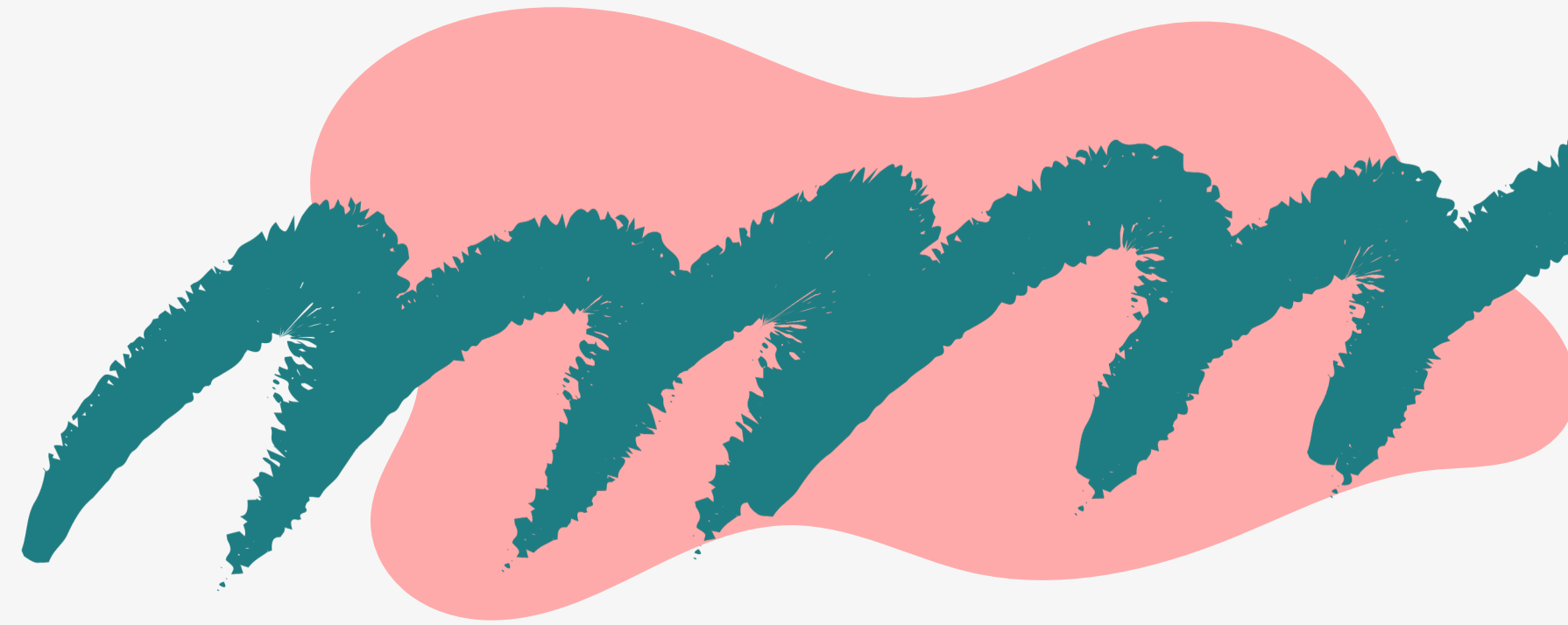
Additional Resources

Suggest readings:

- <https://www.amazon.com/Polyvagal-Theory-Neurophysiological-Communication-Self-regulation/dp/0393707008>
- Using the Polyvagal Theory for Trauma | Dr. Stephen Porges, Being Well Podcast
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CWVgXQKrQ4>



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