



Connecting in Community

with Dr. Shana Johnston

Week 3 - Embodiment and Emotions - Understanding our Nervous System

This week's key points:

- 1) In understanding how our nervous system works, we can begin to understand why we feel the way we do sometimes. When we feel really angry, anxious or depressed, our body may be trying to let us know that our nervous system is having trouble managing the current stress level and that we are moving outside our window of tolerance
- 2) If input into our nervous system exceeds our ability to process that input, our system gets overloaded and our window of tolerance decreases, which decreases our resilience making it even harder to manage our stress and easier for our systems to become overloaded
- 3) Decreasing the excess stress on our nervous systems, tending to ourselves when we're feeling overwhelmed and connecting with others can help us settle our nervous systems and bring us back into balance

Journaling prompts:

What happens in my body and with my emotions when I'm under a lot of stress?

How can I care for myself when I feel out of balance?

Invitation to continue to explore this week's theme:

- 1) Notice what's happening in your body when you feel anxious, angry, depressed or "stressed out". What is your body trying to tell you?
- 2) Explore some of the ideas on the PDF for bringing yourself back into balance when you feel stressed
- 3) Consider doing the body scan meditation at night before bed to release the stress of the day and allow your nervous system to settle



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Course Resources:

- 1) "Understanding our Nervous System" PDF to give a visual of the concepts I've been discussing today
- 2) "Returning to our Window of Tolerance" PDF with ideas to help regulate your nervous system and bring it back into balance
- 3) Body scan meditation MP3 (17min) - this can be a nice way to release the stress of the day and allow your nervous system to settle focusing on relaxation and bringing your body into balance - good one to do before bed

Additional resources:

- 1) Trauma and the Nervous System - A polyvagal perspective - excellent YouTube video explaining the trauma response - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdlQRxwT110>
- 2) A nice little article explaining polyvagal theory and window of tolerance <https://www.intuitivehealingnyc.com/blog/2020/9/21/the-window-of-tolerance-a-very-basic-introduction-to-polyvagal-theory>
- 3) A nice little summary of the "Tend and Befriend" theory <https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/psychpedia/tend-and-befriend>

Models referenced in my talk on the nervous system:

- 1) Polyvagal theory - developed by Stephen Porges
- 2) Tend and Befriend model - developed by Shelley E Taylor

*Forget about Enlightenment.
Sit down and listen to the wind singing in your veins.
Feel the love, feel the longing in your bones.
Open your heart to who you are, right now.
Not who you'd like to be,
But the being right here before you.
All of you is holy.
You're already more than whatever you can know.
Breathe out, look in, let go...*

- John Welwood