

A person wearing a yellow jacket and a backpack is walking across a suspension bridge. The bridge has wooden planks and metal cables. The background shows a forested valley and mountains under a cloudy sky.

Getting started with sympathetic fitness

Kickass Life Project
WWW.SASSYSEXYSTRONG.COM

Life is crazy...

...you are not.

We all move through different states of blah, great, and total chaos, regularly... but sometimes, one state becomes the default 'go-to' state for our nervous system.

If it feels a bit like you're driving a car without good brakes through life, that is your sympathetic nervous system.

And yes, working brakes are possible.



Kate <3



Polyvagal Theory

WTF is that?

Polyvagal Theory was introduced in 1984 and the two big names to look in regards to it are Stephen Porges and Deb Dana.

Polyvagal theory is a way to simplify life (IMO).

See, all mammals have a nervous system. You probably know this as sympathetic (fight flight freeze) and parasympathetic (relax). And we don't consciously control these states.

That last part is true. We don't choose what happens to our body in times of stress or overwhelm or tragedy or fear; our body just reacts.

But how it reacts may be new info for you...

Polyvagal Theory

The sympathetic system

I'm telling you this stuff because it relates to the resources I'm giving you here, and why they are helpful.

It turns out, our autonomic nervous system has 3 states (not 2).

- Ventral vagal (connection)
- **Sympathetic** (protection)
- Dorsal vagal (conservation)

Imagine a ladder. At the top is this idyllic place of play, curiosity, laughter, relaxation, safety, and connection. At the bottom is a place without motivation. This is conservation. (shut down/freeze)

In between is a place of fear, anxiety, mobilization, and **protection**. (flight/fight)



Sympathetic

Climbing the ladder

May I remind you - you don't choose which system is working. Your nervous system decides what is best for your survival.

Make no mistake... this part of your brain and body is REALLY FUKING GOOD at keeping you alive. It just doesn't give a shit about your mental health lol.

But that's ok. You do. You're here, after all so there is still a part of you that is steering your car /boat/horse/life/whatever

Now let's imagine we have the radical idea that we want to feel more in control than we currently do. How could we do that?

Sympathetic

Tool #1

Meet yourself where you are at. We are not trying to 'fix' you. Your body has good reason for choosing whatever nervous system state you're in. So we work with it, instead of against it.

In the get started video (if you watched it and remember), I suggested you dance a jig or generally shake about.

That energy discharge has two main functions.

- One: it gives the energy of the sympathetic system a job to do instead of just making you tense
- Two: it brings you up the ladder a little bit because it makes space for fun

Ventral vagal

Tool #2

So I get it... you're thinking, "*Just get me to this idyllic ventral vagal place where everyone is happy all the time*". Lovely plan.

There's one catch. *We cannot skip steps* - you'll hear me say this a lot. In this case, it means that our attempts to '*calm down*' and '*be still*' don't feel safe (to the nervous system) Your body has a good reason for this which I can explain later.

So giving the energy a job (ie - shaking it off) allows space for you to take a step into stillness. But what happens if we are still in an unsafe place? We get scared and feel the need to protect ourselves... and go back into sympathetic readiness.

So tool #2 is to practice in small doses.

Tool(s) #3

Disclaimer: All these assume the goal is to move up the ladder. That may not always be the case and I'm not suggesting it is what you need to do. But if you do try these things, notice what happens.

- Do exercise that allows some **focused intensity**. Things like medicine ball slams or kettlebell swings. If/when it feels right, you could try adding some pushing exercises.
- Music is a fabulous resource for shifting states. Flavours of **rap or heavy metal or just fast paced** are associated with sympathetic states. You can try meeting yourself there and then introducing some more settled tunes if you like.
- On the webpage, I invited you to turn your head and notice different things. The purpose was to experience mindfulness and curiosity (ventral states) in small, unthreatening doses. I will provide a link to more '**grounding**' exercises below

Life is messy. Fitness is hard. Cupcakes taste better than kale.

FUK IT! Let's have fun anyway.

Kickass Life Project is fitness and counselling for women. Because messy can be fun, you can make friends with fitness, and cupcakes are not the devil (the jury is still out on kale)

TIF masterclass and Intro to Polyvagal Theory included in my free 5 day diet culture detox journey

[BREAK UP WITH TOXIC FITNESS HERE](#)

Attract^o

Created with Growth Tools in Partnership with Leadpages