

Guidelines for completing the regulation map

Adapted by Ally Burr-Harris from:

Dana, D. (2018). *The polyvagal theory in therapy: Engaging the rhythm of regulation*. New York: W. W. Norton

1. Read Deb Dana's PVT Beginner's Guide handout.
2. On the first page of the regulation map handout, identify which state you tend to get stuck in the most. When you slide down the ladder, do you tend to go to Sympathetic or to Dorsal Vagal? Start where you tend to get stuck. Then, jot down all the words that come to mind that describe what you notice when you are there.
 - a. What are your body sensations? Tightness in chest? Clenched fists? Rapid thoughts? Pit in your stomach?
 - b. How do you feel when you are in this state?
 - c. What would others notice if they observed you in this state? In other words, what does Sympathetic state or Dorsal state look like for you on the outside (other's view)?
3. Do this for each state, but start with the one that is most problematic for you.
4. You can also name the state with your own title in the rectangular box on the right side if you are one of those folks who is not likely to remember words like Ventral Vagal. If you are a colors person, feel free to make your different states be represented with different colors of ink.
5. When you are done with the first page, complete these sentences for yourself when you are in each of the three states. "***I am _____.***" "***The world is _____.***" For example, when you are calm and feeling connected in Ventral Vagal state, how would you complete those sentences? By contrast, how would you complete these sentences when you slide down into Sympathetic state? Finally, how would you complete those two sentences if you were in the Dorsal state? Do you notice how we tend to change self view and other/world view depending on our state of regulation? This is why it's so important to not make big decisions when dysregulate. Our ***story*** that we tell ourselves tends to shift depending on our ***state*** of regulation. We must wait until we come back to Ventral vagal and feel regulated to determine the credibility of our story about ourselves or our world.
6. Move on to the second page of ***Glimmers and Triggers***. What sends you to each of these states? This is where you write down the triggers. Be specific!! Are there certain people, places, smells, sounds, memory reminders, actions by others, work demands, hurtful kinds of comments, etc. that send you into a certain state? Do you notice that the triggers for Dorsal Vagal are different from the triggers for Sympathetic state? The more specific you can be about your triggers, the more prepared you can be for them if they are likely to "send you down the ladder."

7. Move on to the third page of ***Things I Can Do....***. This is where you identify what you need in order to re-regulate. Once again, be as specific as you can be. Are there certain rituals that calm you when you are in Sympathetic? A go-to song?
 - a. Here's a suggestion. Take a mental field trip through your typical day. Imagine all the places you tend to go, even if you are imagining going from your car, through your office building, and into your office... or going from room to room within your home. You are likely to notice that certain places or people help you feel lighter, safer, and more regulated. Notice this. Write down all that you can do climb back up the ladder in your first column.
8. Write down what others can do to help you re-regulate in the second column on the third page. Remember that if you are someone that gets stuck in Dorsal Vagal, we have to climb up the ladder to get back to Ventral Vagal. This means we have to activate and get moving if we are to come out of shut-down or collapse.
9. Once you are done completing the final page of your regulation map, consider putting on your detective hat and really trying to develop your best guess at a regulation map for your child. If your child is old enough and interested, a better option is to have them create one and to review it with you.