



THE LADDER & TRAFFIC LIGHT MODELS

AN ORGANISED 3-STEP SYSTEM

My Brilliant Body
www.therestoremethode.com

Three organised steps

Have you ever noticed that sometimes your body feels ready to take on the world, while other times all you want to do is curl up under a cosy blanket and hide away?

Your body isn't broken. It's being clever.

For many years, scientists understood the Autonomic Nervous System as having two main parts: Fight or Flight and Rest and Digest. Then Dr Stephen Porges introduced Polyvagal Theory, helping us understand that our nervous system is even more brilliant than we once thought.

Polyvagal Theory teaches us that our bodies are always asking an important question:
"Am I safely connected?"

Depending on the answer, our nervous system shifts into different states designed to protect us. Sometimes we move into Fight or Flight, preparing us to take action in the face of challenge or danger. Sometimes we experience Safety and Connection, where we can rest, digest, play, learn, and enjoy being with others. And sometimes, when situations feel overwhelming or inescapable, the body can move into Shutdown, helping us conserve energy and protect ourselves.

These responses are not signs of weakness. They are signs of a nervous system doing its very best to keep us safe.

Ideally, our Brilliant Bodies move flexibly between these different states. We rise to meet challenges and then return to connection and regulation when the challenge has passed.

However, prolonged stress, adversity, or trauma can sometimes make it harder for the nervous system to find its way back to safety. We may become more alert to signs of danger, scanning our environment for cues that we are not safe. We might feel constantly "on edge," easily startled, overwhelmed, emotionally exhausted, or disconnected from ourselves and others.

Polyvagal Theory offers us something incredibly hopeful:

Our nervous systems can learn new experiences of safety. Through connection, supportive relationships, body-based practices, and small moments of regulation repeated over time, we can begin to befriend our nervous system responses rather than fear them.

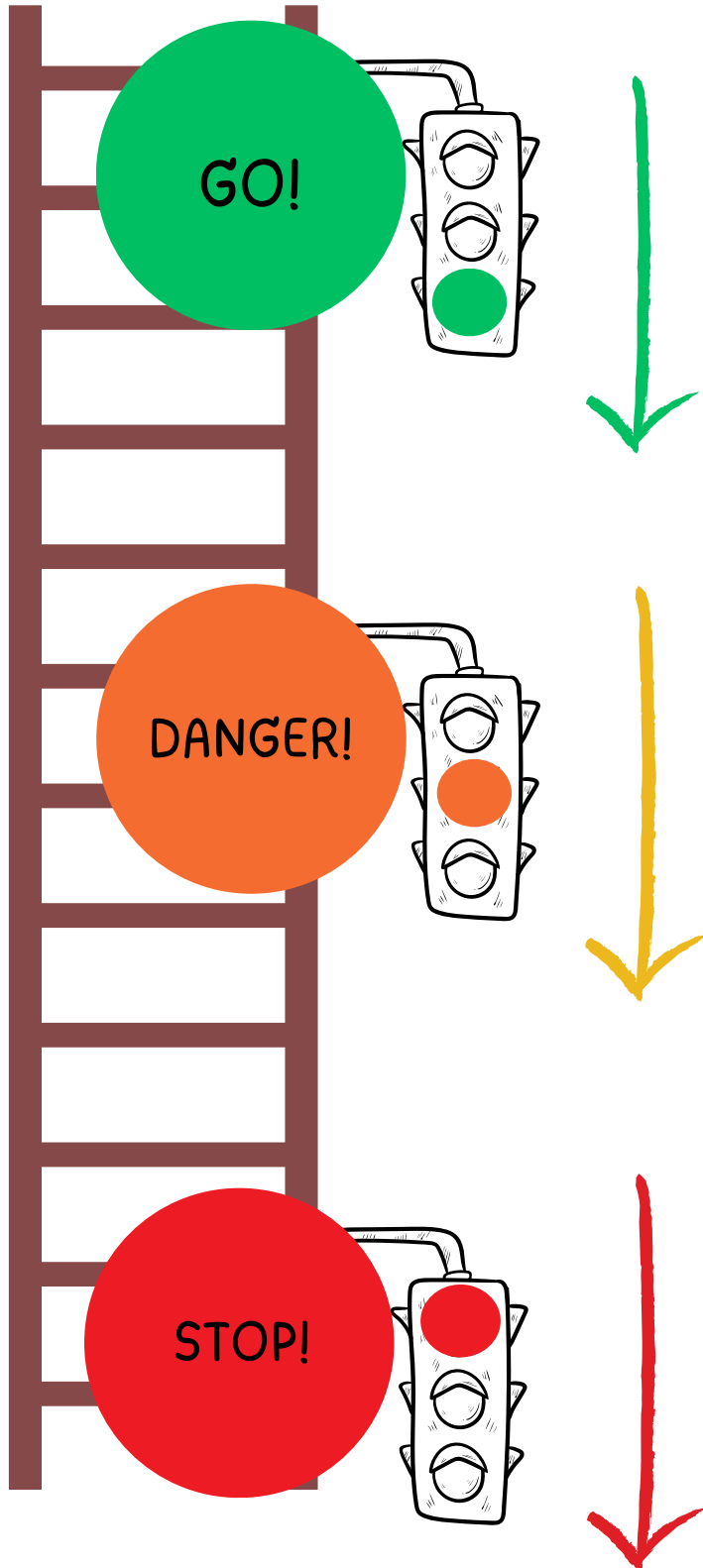
We believe our Brilliant Bodies were designed this way on purpose. The goal isn't to eliminate our protective responses.

The goal is to understand them. Because when we understand our nervous systems, we can meet ourselves with greater compassion, build resilience, and discover the nourishing experience of feeling safe enough to connect with ourselves, others, and the generous present moment of here and now.

A 3-STEP SYSTEM

3 STEPS TO DYSREGULATION: DOWN

Your autonomic nervous system has an organised stress response in that it has to move down through the Sympathetic System.



STEP 1: VENTRAL VAGAL SAFETY

Looking for Cues of Safety,
Co-Regulation and Connection.
Eg: Eye-contact, touch, prosody,
body language, smiles.

It is not adequate and the body
interprets this as Danger/Unsafety.

STEP 2: SYMPATHETIC FLIGHT/FIGHT FLIGHT FIRST - FIGHT SECOND

Responding to Cues of Unsafe Connection
(Danger). Mobilising away from unsafety
first, then towards. Body looks for Safety in
movement.

SOME (EG. TRAUMA SURVIVORS)
OFTEN EXPERIENCE
BLENDED SYMPTOMS HERE OF FREEZE/STUNNED
AND LATER MOVE INTO COLLAPSE

FLIGHT/FIGHT/FREEZE CUES NOT TENDED TO.
BODY NOW SENDS CUES OF TOTAL DISCONNECTION (LIFE THREAT)
AND BODY GOES INTO:

STEP 3: DORSAL VAGAL SHUTDOWN

Body is going into retreat. Person now pulls away to
defend themselves from the lack of safe connection.
Body needs safety in immobilisation and hiding.
Collapse from sadness/disappointment/
disillusionment/shock.

A 3-STEP SYSTEM

3 STEPS TO REGULATION: UP

Your autonomic nervous system has predictable and organised stress response in that it has to move back up through the Sympathetic System.



Through self-regulation and/or co-regulation, you are anchored back in Social Engagement. You feel calm, seen, loved, and connected.

STEP 3: BODY RETURNS TO CALM VENTRAL VAGAL CONNECTION

Look for cues of 'Flight', next. Experienced as avoidance, lack of trust and fear that connection won't be there post anger. REGULATE - Now it's time to remove energy/down-regulate.

Hold space, do calming things. If not adequate, the body will oscillate back down.

FIGHT is usually the first and expected sign when coming out of Shutdown. So is: AGITATION & IRRITATION. This is progress! Keep gently mobilising this body. You're coaxing a sad turtle out of its shell.

STEP 2: BODY MOVES INTO SYMPATHETIC FLIGHT/FIGHT

YOUR BODY STARTS TO MOVE WITH
MOBILISING ENERGY &
VENTRAL ANCHORS (EG. HOPE, OPTIMISM,
LOVE)

STEP 1: DORSAL VAGAL SHUTDOWN

Body in retreat begins to hint it is ready to emerge from Shutdown. Here we intentionally ADD energy to support the body with mobilising energy, the need to move and connect.

