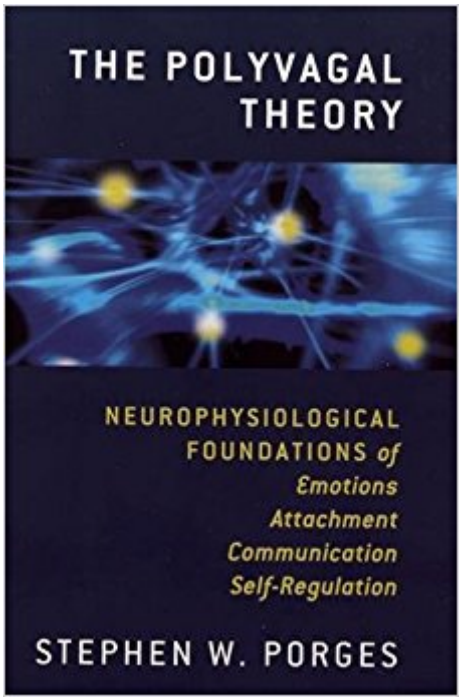
The Polyvagal Theory: Neurophysiological Foundations Of Emotions, Attachment, Communication, And Self-regulation (Norton Series On Interpersonal Neurobiology)



Synopsis

A collection of groundbreaking research by a leading figure in neuroscience. This book compiles, for the first time, Stephen W. PorgesÃ¢â ¬â„¢s decades of research. A leading expert in developmental psychophysiology and developmental behavioral neuroscience, Porges is the mind behind the groundbreaking Polyvagal Theory, which has startling implications for the treatment of anxiety, depression, trauma, and autism. Adopted by clinicians around the world, the Polyvagal Theory has provided exciting new insights into the way our autonomic nervous system unconsciously mediates social engagement, trust, and intimacy.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å“[C]hallenges professionals who interact therapeutically, educationally, clinically or even socially with vulnerable populations to share knowledge and work across our specific disciplines, to prevent, identify and treat mental illness.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Journal of Unified Psychotherapy and Clinical ScienceÃ¢â ¬Å“Stephen Porges has been at the forefront of the investigation of the interplay between neurophysiological processes and developmental status.... It is with The Polyvagal Theory that Porges now presents, in a well-delineated and articulated volume, a highly testable set of hypotheses regarding how the human (and more broadly, mammalian) nervous system has evolved to promote affective regulation and social interaction.... I commend Porges on this effort. Substantial research across a significant career has been well considered and integrated into a quite engaging

and stimulating model regarding the relationship between the heart and the brain.Ã¢â ¬Â• - PsycCritiquesÃ¢â ¬Å“[O]ne of the most important books written on the nervous system in the last fifty years. PorgesÃ¢â ¬â„¢s ambitious, meticulous, synthetic theory provides a missing link between mind and the nervous system. It also helps explain, in fine detail, how our individual nervous systems influence, and are influenced by, our interactions with others. Suddenly we understand things novelists have described for centuries: how it is that a facial expression, a gesture, a certain tone of voice, can trigger a radical mental reorganization, and lead to engagment, and how our mental and nervous system states shift. PorgesÃ¢â ¬â„¢s studies and his theory of the social vagus represents a major advance in human knowledge, and is already improving the practice psychotherapy and mind-body medicine.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Norman Doidge, MD, author, The Brain That Changes ItselfÃ¢â ¬Å“A truly revolutionary perspective on human nature, Porges challenges current theory, illuminates old findings so that we see them differently, and raises dozens of questions for new scientific research. The reach is broad, the depth astounding.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Paul Ekman, PhD, Professor Emeritus, University of California at San Francisco, and President & Founder, Paul Ekman Group, LLCÃ¢â ¬Å“The Polyvagal Theory is at the leading edge of psychosomatic medicine and body-mind therapies. It is a vital contribution to scientifically-informed clinical practice. Psychologists, analysts, physicians, bodyworkers, and educators are provided with an essential map to help guide them in tracking the psychophysiological states of their clients, discern where they are Ã¢â ¬Ëœstuck,Ã¢â ¬â„¢ and help them to heal and move forward in life. Dr. PorgesÃ¢â ¬â„¢s great contribution is now compiled in this one astounding comprehensive volume. It is a must-read for clinicians and psychobiological researchers.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Peter A. Levine, PhD, author of In Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness

Stephen W. Porges, PhD,Ã Â is Distinguished University Scientist at Indiana University, where he directs the Trauma Research Center within the Kinsey Institute. He holds the position of Professor of Psychiatry at the University of North Carolina and Professor Emeritus at the University of Illinois at Chicago and the University of Maryland. He served as president of both the Society for Psychophysiological Research and the Federation of Associations in Behavioral & Brain Sciences and is a former recipient of a National Institute of Mental Health Research Scientist Development Award. He has published more than 250 peer-reviewed scientific papers across several disciplines including anaesthesiology, biomedical engineering, critical care medicine, ergonomics, exercise physiology, gerontology, neurology, neuroscience, obstetrics, pediatrics, psychiatry, psychology, psychometrics, space medicine, and substance abuse. In 1994 he proposed the Polyvagal Theory,

a theory that links the evolution of the mammalian autonomic nervous system to social behavior and emphasizes the importance of physiological state in the expression of behavioral problems and psychiatric disorders. The theory is leading to innovative treatments based on insights into the mechanisms mediating symptoms observed in several behavioral, psychiatric, and physical disorders.

I am merely a psychology-degree wielding 24 year old with a natural curiosity for anything that influences behavior. This theory, developed by Steven Porges over 40 years of research, is one of the most comprehensive examinations of the influence of the vagus nerves on the physiological and psychological functioning of humans. The theory hinges on the idea that there are three components of the autonomic nervous system (ANS): the reptilian unmyelinated vagus branch, the sympathetic nervous system, and the myelinated neomammalian vagus branch. These branches, in order, correlate to different behavioral responses. The unmyelinated controls homeostatic functions as well as the "freeze" response. As such it develops first, in utero. The sympathetic nervous system, through the spinal cord, controls fight/flight responses by activating the pituitary-adrenal-hypothalamic axis. Finally, exclusive to mammals is the myelinated vagus which acts primarily to control the heart rate via connections to the sinoatrial node of the heart. These components of the ANS act in phylogenetic order, so the myelinated vagus inhibits functioning of the sympathetic nervous system, which inhibits the unmyelinated vagus.The focal point of Porges' book is that the development of the myelinated vagus, originating in nuclei called the nucleus ambiguus, is crucial to inhibiting the fight/flight/freeze responses in response to environmental stimuli. The assessing of risk in the environment, which he calls neuroception, is regulated unconsciously and the myelinated vagus helps to resist primal behavioral responses. The strength of the myelinated vagus can be measured using respiratory sinus arrhythmia (RSA), which is an indication of beat-to-beat heart rate variability. When RSA is high, vagal "tone" is high, indicating a strong myelinated vagus. When the RSA is lower, it indicates less vagal "tone" and therefore a weaker myelinated vagus. Humans with low vagal tone are less likely to engage in prosocial behavior because they have less ability to prevent themselves from plunging into fight/flight/freeze behavior when posed with environmental challenges. Porges adds a fourth behavioral adaptation which is "social engagement" (to go along with fight, flight, and freeze responses). In mammals, prosocial engagement is facilitated by high vagal influences on the heart which prevent the individual from entering fight/flight mode. As Porges explains, these vagal influences are strong predictors of positive attachment, healthy social behavior, self-regulation, and even attention

span.The implications of this theory are vast, and it opens up a plethora of research topics for the coming generation of psychophysiologists. Hopefully this book can be as enlightening for other readers as it was for me. I just wanted to give a terse overview of the theory, but nothing can replace actually purchasing the book and delving deep into the subject matter. Enjoy.

Porges has made some very significant discoveries on the nature of emotion, the nervous system, and its significance for physical and mental health as well as a general understanding of human behavior: why we are the way we are. This book collects some of the most significant papers he's written on the topics, all on the basis of what he has come to call the "polyvagal theory". For decades the understanding of the autonomic nervous system and its relation to stress has been overly simplistic. It has ignored the very large role of visceral feedback on brain processes and the hierarchical nature of our response to the environment, whether it is safe or threatening.The book is quite academic and uses scientific jargon, so be prepared for that. It can be quite dry and repetitive, given that the various chapters were written as essays and include a lot of necessary "background" material. That said, the repetition is great for learning what might otherwise be confusing and difficult topics. If you don't have any previous training in psychology, this is a great help. And the information is paradigm-changing in its importance.Summing up just a few of the basics of the polyvagal theory, Porges bases his analysis on an in-depth study of the evolution of the nervous system from the simplest invertebrates to mammalian life and humans in particular. This approach brings with it some important insights. For one, our nervous system is constantly assessing the environment, whether it is safe or not. This process happens without our conscious awareness. Ordinarily, if the environment is safe, we predominantly use our newest "hardware", so to speak. We are socially engaging, communicative. We share, love, nurture, support, play. This is intimately tied with the myelinated vagus, which as a result of evolutionary processes, is intimately tied with heart rate, breathing, and the use of the muscles in the neck, head, and face. All of these are integral to the expression of emotion. But when we encounter a dangerous situation, we revert to an evolutionary 'older' system. We stop engaging socially and instead fight or flee. And if the danger looks hopeless, the primitive vagus takes over, immobilizing us for a painless death. Trauma can leave us stuck in one of those lower circuits, as can various forms of mental illness (autism, PTSD, borderline personality disorder, etc.).Porges uses these concepts to analyze human behaviors, like play, sex, communication, monogamy in a new light. And all together, it demonstrates just how important it is to our well-being to have a good vagal 'tone'. That's where programs likeÃ Â Ãƒâ iriÃƒÂº EolasÃ Â are so useful, as a way of calming down our stress response,

reducing inflammation, and fostering healthy emotion and the vagal benefits of prosociality, bodily restoration and healing. As he points out, the state of the body is intimately tied to the mind. While external stimuli can trigger intense visceral states (fear, terror, rage), it works the other way, too. Visceral states (inflammation, illness, bodily stress) can influence our emotions and our general psychological state. An understanding of how these systems work, and how healthy states can be actively fostered, will go a long way to healing the many illnesses of civilization, whether they be mental illness like depression or anxiety disorders, or modern diseases.After reading this book, I can’t help but think that our society as a whole does NOT foster polyvagal health. We are less communicative, less helpful, less ’happy’, less nurturing, and on and on. Hopefully this book will bring more awareness to the fact that these things are essential to human health, and we can do something about actively fostering them. Eiriu Eolas is doing that, as are some clinicians who utilize the advances made by Porges. Hopefully that will keep expanding. Until then, do read this book. It’s a lot more coherent than the reigning theories at this time, and if you like understanding things, will not disappoint.

Stephen Porges provides a phenomenal explanation of the polyvagal theory with examples and accessible language. Theoretical concepts, and especially neurological concepts, are sometimes hard for me to grasp, but he explains it well in this book. I used Polyvagal Theory as the basis for my graduate project and have used his theory to help explain the neurological reasons for therapeutic intervention for children with autism and adults with dementia. I use some of the language, such as "neuroception" that Porges uses to help others understand how important it is to send out "neuroceptive cues" that will help individuals when in crisis, or fight/flight or freeze states, in response to the environment.

Astonishing, if true. I’m not a doctor or biologist, but this work seems well referenced. It could go a long way to explaining important previously not well under phenomena. While it seems to be directed to doctors, I found it fairly accessible to anyone with an interest in this area.

Stephen Porges concepts are helping me understand what my brain and heart havedone since birth trauma and attachment days. It is taking me ages to read and I certainly understandonly a small part of it’s complexity. It’s written for MD’s and Neurologists. I think it should also be requiredreading (for basic concepts) for psychologists, anthropologists, and mental health counselors.

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