Tab 1

# Week

11

# Day

1

# Day Title

Polyvagal Awareness: States of Safety and Survival

# Lesson Name

Nervous System Regulation

# Meme

(insert meme image)

# Summary

Polyvagal Theory describes how the nervous system shifts between states of safety, activation, and shutdown. These states are protective, not pathological, and each plays a role in survival. Healing requires learning how to guide the body back into balance, especially into the parasympathetic “rest and digest” state. Polyvagal awareness helps us recognize our states with compassion, support recovery after stress, and build resilience through practices that honor the body’s rhythms.

# Daily Passage

The nervous system is the body’s built-in guide for survival and connection. It constantly scans the environment, asking a simple but vital question: *Am I safe or in danger?* This process happens beneath conscious thought and shapes everything from how we breathe to how we relate to others. When we begin to understand how the nervous system shifts between states, we can meet ourselves with more compassion and learn practical ways to support healing.

The word *vagus* comes from the Latin root *vagus*, meaning “wandering.” The vagus nerve, the longest cranial nerve in the body, wanders from the brainstem down through the face, heart, lungs, and gut. This nerve is central to Polyvagal Theory, developed by Dr. Stephen Porges, which describes how our nervous system organizes itself into states of safety, mobilization, or shutdown.

The human body is wired to protect itself from danger. When the nervous system detects threat, it shifts into the sympathetic state, often described as fight or flight. This state increases heart rate, quickens breath, and floods the body with stress hormones to prepare for action. While essential for survival, remaining in this state for long periods creates exhaustion, anxiety, and disconnection. Healing requires learning how to gently guide the body back into the parasympathetic state, often called rest and digest.

The word parasympathetic comes from Greek roots: *para* meaning alongside, and *sympathetikos* meaning affected together. The parasympathetic system works alongside the sympathetic, balancing the body by restoring calm after stress. It slows the heart, deepens the breath, and brings digestion and repair back online. When we learn to support this shift, we create conditions for safety and healing.

According to Polyvagal Theory, we move between three primary states:

1. **Ventral Vagal – Safety and Connection.** In this state, the body feels calm, the heart rate is steady, and we are able to connect with others. We feel grounded, curious, and capable of engaging with life.
2. **Sympathetic – Mobilization.** Here the body prepares for fight or flight. The heart races, muscles tense, and the mind sharpens to detect threats. This state is protective but exhausting if prolonged.
3. **Dorsal Vagal – Shutdown.** When danger feels overwhelming, the body may shut down. This state can bring numbness, disconnection, or collapse, as if the system has “checked out” to protect itself from further overwhelm.

None of these states are “bad.” They are all protective strategies designed to keep us alive. The problem comes when the system gets stuck—when we remain in fight-or-flight long after the danger has passed, or when shutdown prevents us from re-engaging with life. Healing requires flexibility: the ability to move between states as needed, returning again and again to safety.

Psychologically, the ability to move between fight or flight and rest and digest is central to resilience. Stress is unavoidable, but recovery is essential. When the body cannot shift back, stress accumulates, leading to burnout or illness. Practices that calm the nervous system are not luxuries; they are necessities for health. Trauma often disrupts this natural rhythm. If the body has learned that danger is constant, it may remain locked in sympathetic activation. For others, attempts to rest may trigger fear, as if letting go of vigilance will expose them to harm. Healing begins by teaching the nervous system, slowly and gently, that it is safe to move into rest.

Spiritually, polyvagal awareness reminds us that connection is our natural state. Many traditions describe love, compassion, or presence as the essence of human life. Ventral vagal states reflect this truth in the body. When we feel safe and open, we naturally reach for others, for spirit, for the beauty of life. The shift into rest and digest mirrors teachings about surrender and trust. Rest is not weakness but a way of aligning with the rhythms of creation.

In psychedelic journeys, nervous system states often become amplified. A journey may bring moments of deep safety and connection, but it may also activate fight-or-flight responses or shutdown if old trauma surfaces. Integration requires recognizing these states and tending to them with compassion. Returning to the body through breath, grounding, or safe touch helps us anchor insights without retraumatization.

Practical ways to support the nervous system include:

* **Lengthen the exhale.** Breathing out more slowly than breathing in signals safety to the vagus nerve.
* **Progressive muscle relaxation.** Tensing and releasing muscles helps the body let go of held tension.
* **Gentle humming or singing.** Vibrations stimulate the vagus nerve and calm the heart rate.
* **Rocking or swaying.** Rhythmic movement reassures the body, much like soothing a child.
* **Mindful eating.** Slowing down during meals supports digestion and signals to the body that it is safe to rest.
* **Seek connection.** A call to a trusted friend, eye contact with a loved one, or simply sitting near others can activate the ventral vagal system.

Ultimately, polyvagal awareness teaches us that we are not broken. We are adaptive. Our nervous system has always been working to protect us. By listening, learning, and responding with compassion, we create new patterns of safety. The wandering vagus nerve becomes not just a survival pathway but a guide back home to connection, presence, and wholeness.

# Alternative View

While Polyvagal Theory has become highly influential in somatic therapy and trauma work, some researchers argue that more scientific evidence is needed to fully validate its claims. They caution against treating it as a universal explanation for all human responses. Instead, it may be best used as a supportive map for understanding experience rather than as a rigid framework.

# Activity

How do I notice when I am in fight, flight, or freeze?

What helps me recognize when I am shifting into “rest and digest”?

When was the last time I felt deeply connected and safe? What cues supported that state?

What practices help me move gently from activation into rest?

How might I reframe my nervous system states as protective rather than problematic?

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# Domain

Body

# Modality

Somatic

Tab 2

# Week

11

# Day

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# Day Title

Orienting to the Environment

# Lesson Name

Nervous System Regulation

# Meme

(insert meme image)

# Summary

Orienting is the practice of using the senses to notice the environment and return to safety. It interrupts cycles of fear, grounds us in the present, and helps regulate the nervous system. By turning outward with curiosity, we rediscover beauty, presence, and connection with life.

# Daily Passage

When the nervous system senses danger, it pulls our attention inward or narrows our focus. This is protective but can keep us stuck in cycles of fear or hypervigilance. Orienting is the practice of turning outward, using our senses to take in the environment, notice safety, and reconnect with the present moment. It is one of the simplest yet most powerful ways to regulate the nervous system.

The word *orient* comes from the Latin *oriens*, meaning “rising” or “east,” the direction of the sunrise. To orient is literally to turn toward the light. In the same way, orienting through our senses allows us to turn toward safety, clarity, and presence.

Psychologically, orienting helps shift us out of automatic survival responses. When we pause to look around, we remind the body that the danger may no longer be here. This interrupts the loop of fight-or-flight or freeze and invites curiosity instead of fear. For example, noticing the colors in a room, the sounds outside a window, or the texture of the ground beneath our feet sends cues of safety to the nervous system.

Trauma often leaves us disconnected from the environment, stuck in the body’s memory of threat. Orienting gently teaches the body that the world around us can hold safety too. Over time, this practice rewires the nervous system to respond with more flexibility, allowing us to relax rather than brace against life.

Spiritually, orienting is a practice of presence and reverence. By turning our attention to the world around us, we rediscover beauty in the ordinary: the curve of a leaf, the rhythm of birdsong, the warmth of sunlight. Many traditions encourage this kind of attentiveness as a way to honor creation and remind us that life unfolds in each moment. Orienting becomes a small act of prayer, an embodied reminder that we are part of something larger.

In psychedelic integration, orienting is especially valuable. After a journey, it is common to feel ungrounded or overwhelmed by heightened perceptions. Orienting to the environment provides a reliable way to return to the body and the present. Simply looking around a room, touching a familiar object, or listening to soothing sounds can help translate expanded states into grounded stability.

Practical ways to practice orienting include:

1. **Look around slowly.** Move your head gently from side to side, allowing your eyes to notice colors, shapes, and movement in the environment.
2. **Engage the senses.** Notice three things you can see, hear, and feel in the moment.
3. **Name safety.** Say quietly to yourself, “Right now, in this place, I am safe.”
4. **Connect with nature.** Step outside and notice the sky, the trees, or the ground beneath you. Nature often provides the most immediate cues of safety.
5. **Use a grounding object.** Keep a stone, fabric, or other object you can hold to remind yourself of the present.

Internal resources support orienting by helping us stay steady while we look outward. A slow breath, a hand on the heart, or recalling a supportive memory can strengthen the practice. Over time, orienting becomes second nature, something we do automatically when stress rises.

Ultimately, orienting to the environment is a way of teaching the body that safety exists not only within but around us. By turning toward the world with curiosity and openness, we invite the nervous system to soften its guard. Presence returns, and with it comes the realization that we are supported by earth, sky, sound, and space in every moment.

# Alternative View

Some perspectives caution that orienting may not feel safe for everyone. For people living in environments that are actually unsafe or overwhelming, turning outward may increase stress. In these cases, orienting must be adapted, focusing on small, neutral details or using internal anchors until external safety is more available.

# Activity

1. What do you notice in your body when you take a moment to look around your environment?
2. How does your critic respond to the idea of orienting? What reassurance might it need?
3. Recall a time when your surroundings helped you feel calmer. What specific sensory details contributed to that?
4. How could you incorporate orienting into your daily routine, such as before meals or after work?
5. If you were to “turn toward the light” in your current life, what might that look like?

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# Domain

# Modality

Somatic

Tab 3

# Week

11

# Day

3

# Day Title

Co-regulation and Self-Regulation

# Lesson Name

Nervous System Regulation

# Meme

(insert meme image)

# Summary

Co-regulation is the process of finding safety through connection with others, while self-regulation is the ability to soothe ourselves using internal resources. Both are necessary for resilience. Healthy regulation means knowing when to lean on others and when to resource ourselves, weaving together interdependence and autonomy.

# Daily Passage

Humans are wired for connection. From the moment of birth, our nervous systems learn to regulate in relationship with others. A baby relies on a caregiver’s voice, touch, and presence to settle. This is called co-regulation, the process of borrowing calm and safety from another nervous system. Over time, as we grow and internalize these experiences, we also develop the capacity for self-regulation, the ability to soothe and balance ourselves.

Both co-regulation and self-regulation are essential. Co-regulation provides the foundation, and self-regulation grows from that base. Yet in modern culture, self-regulation is often emphasized while co-regulation is undervalued, sometimes even seen as weakness. The truth is that humans remain relational beings throughout life. Even as adults, we benefit profoundly from shared regulation: a hug that eases anxiety, a friend’s reassuring words, or simply sitting in the presence of someone calm.

The nervous system is highly responsive to cues of safety from others. Eye contact, a warm tone of voice, or gentle touch can signal ventral vagal safety, shifting us out of fight, flight, or shutdown. This is why connection is so powerful in times of stress. We do not regulate in isolation; we regulate in relationship.

Self-regulation, on the other hand, is the practice of turning inward and using inner resources to restore balance. This might include breathwork, grounding through the senses, or recalling supportive imagery. Self-regulation allows us to navigate challenges when co-regulation is not available. It builds resilience and autonomy while still honoring our need for connection.

Psychologically, the balance between co-regulation and self-regulation is key. Too much dependence on others can feel disempowering, while too much self-reliance can lead to isolation. Healthy regulation involves knowing when to lean into connection and when to resource ourselves.

Spiritually, co-regulation reflects the truth of interconnection. Many traditions speak of humans as part of a web of life, sustained by relationships with others, with nature, and with the divine. To regulate together is to remember we are not alone. Self-regulation, in this light, becomes not isolation but the inner expression of the same connection, drawing on the breath, the body, or a sense of spirit as companions.

In psychedelic journeys, both forms of regulation are vital. A trusted sitter or guide provides co-regulation when intensity rises, offering grounding presence through voice, eye contact, or touch. Integration continues this relational support, helping to anchor insights in safety. At the same time, learning self-regulation tools; like focusing on breath, movement, or sensory grounding, empowers us to navigate overwhelming moments with greater confidence.

Practical ways to practice co-regulation include:

* Spending time with trusted people who feel safe and supportive.
* Allowing yourself to receive comfort through touch, hugs, or proximity.
* Using voice and sound—singing together, chanting, or simply hearing soothing tones.

Practical ways to practice self-regulation include:

* Noticing breath and gently lengthening the exhale.
* Engaging grounding practices such as touch, sight, or sound.
* Using visualization or recalling supportive memories.
* Practicing gentle movement to release activation.

Ultimately, healing is not about choosing between co-regulation and self-regulation but weaving both. We learn to rest into connection with others while also cultivating the ability to soothe ourselves. This balance allows us to move through life with greater resilience, flexibility, and compassion.

# Alternative View

Some argue that too much emphasis on co-regulation can foster dependency and prevent individuals from developing strong self-regulation skills. Others caution that an over-focus on self-regulation risks reinforcing isolation. Ideally, both are seen as complementary rather than competing needs.

# Activity

How do I experience co-regulation in my life? Who helps me feel safe?

What self-regulation practices do I rely on most often?

Do I lean more heavily toward co-regulation or self-regulation? How does that affect me?

How might I create more balance between seeking connection and resourcing myself?

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# Domain

Body

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Tab 4

# Week

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# Day

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# Day Title

Somatic Resourcing

# Lesson Name

Nervous System Regulation

# Meme

(insert meme image)

# Summary

Somatic resourcing means creating inner and outer anchors that give the body a felt sense of safety. Resources can include supportive memories, grounding touch, safe places, or meaningful objects. By cultivating these resources, we strengthen resilience and provide the nervous system with reliable pathways back to balance.

# Daily Passage

When life feels overwhelming, our nervous system searches for signs of safety. One way we can support this is through somatic resourcing—building inner and outer anchors that help us return to balance. A resource is anything that gives the body a felt sense of safety, steadiness, or comfort. Unlike coping strategies that distract us from discomfort, resourcing helps us turn toward the body with compassion and support.

Resources can be both external and internal. External resources include safe people, comforting objects, familiar environments, or grounding rituals. Internal resources include supportive memories, images, sensations, or parts of the body that feel strong and calm. The goal is not to eliminate difficult feelings but to create a foundation from which we can meet them without being overwhelmed.

Somatic resourcing draws on the body’s natural capacity for regulation. When we recall a memory of being held, notice the warmth of the sun, or place a hand gently on the heart, the nervous system receives cues of safety. These signals can shift us out of fight, flight, or freeze and into greater stability. Over time, the body learns that safety is accessible even in challenging moments.

Psychologically, somatic resources help soften the impact of trauma triggers. They act like anchors, reminding us that while part of us may be reliving the past, another part is grounded in the present. This dual awareness allows healing to unfold at a tolerable pace.

Spiritually, resourcing can be seen as cultivating inner sanctuary. Many traditions use sacred symbols, mantras, or visualizations as resources. Whether through the image of light, a protective guide, or the felt presence of spirit, these practices invite us into deeper trust and connection.

In psychedelic journeys, resourcing is essential. Intensity can rise quickly, and without anchors, the experience may feel destabilizing. Having resources such as breath awareness, grounding touch, or a trusted sitter’s voice can help reorient us. Integration continues this work by weaving the resources into daily life, ensuring that insights are supported by embodied safety.

Practical ways to explore somatic resourcing include:

* **Safe place visualization.** Imagine a location where you feel secure and peaceful, and notice how your body responds.
* **Supportive memory.** Recall a time when you felt loved or cared for, letting the sensation spread through the body.
* **Grounding touch.** Place a hand over the heart, cradle the face, or hug yourself, noticing the soothing effect.
* **Body anchor.** Identify a part of your body that feels steady (such as feet on the ground) and return attention there during stress.
* **Resource objects.** Carry a stone, scarf, or other meaningful item that reminds you of safety.

Ultimately, somatic resourcing is about building trust—with the body, with memory, and with life. Each resource becomes a thread in a web of safety that supports healing. Over time, this web grows stronger, making it easier to meet challenges with presence and resilience.

# Alternative View

Some may find that resourcing feels artificial at first or that positive memories are hard to access. In these cases, starting with very simple resources, such as noticing the breath or feeling the support of the ground, may be more effective. Resourcing should always feel supportive, not forced.

# Activity

What external resources in my life help me feel safe and steady?

What internal images, memories, or sensations bring me comfort?

How does my body respond when I connect with a resource?

Which resource feels most accessible to me in moments of stress?

Tools:

Anchoring Tool

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# Domain

Body

# Modality

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Tab 5

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# Day

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# Day Title

Body Memory and Somatic Release

# Lesson Name

Nervous System Regulation

# Meme

(insert meme image)

# Summary

Body memory refers to the ways experiences, especially trauma, are stored in the body as tension, posture, or sensation. Somatic release allows the body to discharge what was left unfinished, restoring balance. Healing arises not from reliving trauma but from allowing the body to complete its natural cycles safely.

# Daily Passage

The body holds memory. While we often think of memory as something stored in the mind, many experiences, especially overwhelming ones, are remembered through the body. These body memories may show up as tension, pain, posture, or sensation that seems to arise without clear reason. A smell, sound, or gesture may trigger an old feeling before the mind even realizes what is happening.

Trauma researchers often describe this as “the body keeps the score.” When overwhelming events occur, the body’s natural stress response may not have the chance to complete. Energy that was mobilized for fight or flight gets stuck, leading to patterns of bracing, numbing, or shutting down. Over time, this unprocessed energy can contribute to chronic stress, emotional reactivity, or disconnection.

Somatic release is the process of helping the body complete what it could not finish in the past. This does not mean reliving trauma but allowing the body to discharge stored tension in gentle, safe ways. Release may happen through shaking, trembling, tears, laughter, sighing, or changes in posture and breath. These natural responses are the body’s way of finishing the cycle and moving toward balance.

Psychologically, recognizing body memory can help us understand that our reactions are not personal flaws but protective responses. A sudden tightening of the chest or urge to withdraw may not reflect the present moment but an old imprint seeking completion. With awareness and compassion, we can meet these reactions not with shame but with curiosity.

Spiritually, body memory can be viewed as a form of wisdom. The body carries not only pain but also resilience, holding the story of how we survived. Somatic release then becomes an act of honoring the body’s intelligence, allowing it to express and restore itself. Many traditions use ritual, dance, or song as communal forms of somatic release, helping both individuals and communities metabolize collective stress.

In psychedelic journeys, body memories often surface. A person may feel intense shaking, pressure, or waves of energy moving through them. While this can be frightening, it is often a sign of the body attempting to release long-held patterns. With safe support, these experiences can be profoundly healing. Integration then involves continuing to listen to the body, giving it gentle ways to move and express what was stirred up.

Practical ways to support somatic release include:

* **Shaking.** Stand with feet grounded and gently shake the body, letting movement spread naturally.
* **Vocal expression.** Humming, sighing, or sounding can help release tension in the throat and chest.
* **Movement.** Stretching, dancing, or walking can allow energy to flow where it has been stuck.
* **Breath awareness.** Noticing when the breath is held and gently encouraging release with long exhales.
* **Gentle touch.** Placing hands on areas of tension can bring warmth and attention that encourages letting go.

Ultimately, body memory and somatic release remind us that healing is not only a mental process. The body remembers, and the body can let go. By allowing space for gentle release, we create the possibility of freedom, presence, and renewed vitality.

# Alternative View

Some argue that focusing too much on body memory risks reinforcing trauma rather than resolving it. Without proper support, attempts at somatic release may overwhelm or retraumatize. For this reason, gentle pacing and supportive environments are essential, and professional guidance may be necessary for deeper work.

# Activity

When do I notice sensations in my body that seem connected to past experiences?

How does my body tend to hold stress—tightness, heaviness, numbness?

What practices help my body release tension safely?

How might I honor my body’s wisdom as it remembers and lets go?

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Tab 6

# Week

11

# Day

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# Day Title

Creating a Personal Regulation Toolkit

# Lesson Name

Nervous System Regulation

# Meme

(insert meme image)

# Summary

A personal regulation toolkit is a customized set of practices, objects, and reminders that help us meet stress with resilience. Like a carpenter’s tools, these are instruments for repair and restoration. A strong toolkit includes strategies for calming, energizing, co-regulation, and resourcing. Each time we use it, we strengthen trust in our ability to return to balance and reinforce the nervous system’s sense of safety.

# Daily Passage

Healing is not about eliminating stress but about having resources to meet it. The nervous system will always cycle through states of safety, activation, and sometimes shutdown. What matters is our ability to respond with kindness and skill when these shifts occur. A **personal regulation toolkit** is a collection of practices, reminders, and objects that help us return to balance when we feel overwhelmed. Creating this toolkit empowers us to meet life’s challenges with resilience.

The word *tool* comes from Old English *tōl*, meaning an instrument or implement. In this context, tools are not mechanical objects but supportive practices that allow us to repair, restore, and steady the nervous system. Just as a carpenter relies on well-chosen tools, we can equip ourselves with techniques that strengthen our inner stability.

A toolkit is most effective when it is personalized. What soothes one person may not soothe another. Some find breath practices grounding, while others feel safer using touch, movement, or sound. The key is experimentation and curiosity: noticing what genuinely helps your body feel steady and supported.

A strong regulation toolkit includes practices for different needs:

* **Down-regulation.** To calm the body when in fight-or-flight. Examples: slow exhaling, grounding through the senses, restorative yoga, weighted blankets.
* **Up-regulation.** To bring energy back when in shutdown. Examples: shaking, brisk walking, cold water on the face, energizing music.
* **Co-regulation.** Reaching out to others for support through conversation, eye contact, or physical presence.
* **Resourcing.** Using internal or external anchors such as safe place visualizations, meaningful objects, or memories of care.

Psychologically, having a regulation toolkit reduces feelings of helplessness. When distress arises, it is easy to feel at the mercy of the nervous system. A toolkit reminds us that we have options. Whether through breathwork, grounding, or self-touch, we can take small steps that shift our state. Each successful use of a tool builds confidence, reinforcing the message: “I can handle this.”

Trauma can leave us believing that regulation is out of reach. Old patterns may feel automatic and unchangeable. The critic may insist that we are powerless, while the child may feel too afraid to try. Building a toolkit proves otherwise. Every time we use a tool, we demonstrate to our nervous system that safety and choice are possible.

Spiritually, a toolkit can be seen as a set of rituals. Just as traditions use candles, beads, or mantras to guide presence, our personal toolkit contains reminders of safety and connection. A smooth stone, a meaningful word, or a song can become sacred anchors, helping us return to ourselves. These items and practices carry energy beyond their physical form, pointing us back to wholeness.

Practical steps for creating a personal regulation toolkit include:

1. **Identify supportive practices.** Choose 3 to 5 techniques that reliably calm you, such as lengthened breathing, orienting, or self-touch.
2. **Select grounding objects.** Gather small items like a smooth stone, essential oil, or calming photo that remind you of safety.
3. **Create a list of affirmations.** Write down phrases such as “I am safe now” or “I can return to calm” to use when needed.
4. **Build in relational resources.** Include the names or phone numbers of supportive people who can offer co-regulation.
5. **Keep it accessible.** Store your toolkit in a bag, journal, or special box so it is available in times of stress.

In psychedelic journeys, a toolkit is invaluable. Having grounding practices ready—like focusing on breath, touching a stone, or listening to calming music—provides stability when intensity rises. Afterward, the same practices support integration, helping insights settle into the body and daily rhythm.

Ultimately, creating a personal regulation toolkit is an act of self-trust. It is a way of saying to the nervous system, “I will be here for you when stress arises.” By gathering tools of breath, touch, grounding, and connection, we strengthen resilience and restore agency. The nervous system learns that it does not have to remain stuck in fear or shutdown, because support is always near.

# Alternative View

Some caution that a toolkit may risk becoming a checklist of techniques rather than a living, felt practice. It is not about collecting as many tools as possible but about cultivating a few that feel deeply supportive. For deeper healing, a toolkit should be paired with relational support, therapy, and lifestyle changes, rather than seen as a quick fix.

# Activity

What 3 to 5 practices reliably help me feel calmer or more grounded?

What objects or sensory anchors bring me comfort and safety?

How might I bring spiritual or ritual meaning into my toolkit?

Who can I turn to for co-regulation, and how might I include them in my toolkit?

How can I practice using my toolkit in daily life so it feels natural when stress arises?

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