The Autonomic Nervous System controls everything, basically. It regulates all the internal organs **without any conscious direction or effort**. It's autonomic. Breathing, heart rate, sweating, internal temperature regulation, digestion and more.

It's historically been known as two antagonistic systems: sympathetic and parasympathetic. As if these two were competing against each other for dominance. But Dr Stephen Porges explains that it's more complex than that in his Polyvagal Theory. It turns out there is actually **the sympathetic system and two parasympathetic systems** that work in concert to benefit the mammalian organism.

**The sympathetic system** is the flight/fight mobilization circuitry. This is located in the chest and controls the legs for evasion and the arms for aggression. The mobilization system is ideal for pushing away a danger and then getting to safety. **The first parasympathetic system** is the immobility system, located in the gut. This circuitry is responsible for the shutdown, collapsed behaviors that we see in a mammal when its life is threatened. And **the second and newer parasympathetic system** is the social engagement system, located in the face and neck and connected to the heart. This system is active when safe and allows for social connection with other safe mammals.

When autonomic shifts happen, the internal organs and bodily **resources are repurposed** and used for defensive or connective purposes. For example, when in danger and more sympathetically charged, the mouth may go dry. This is because the body no longer needs saliva for chewing when it's mobilized for running or fighting. The body prioritizes its processes based on what it neurocepts as safe, dangerous or life threatening. When under life threat, all systems are reduced to support basic life maintenance, such as heart rate and breathing. The entire body slows down, imitating a corpse.