Safety and social engagement

The safety and social engagement system is the ventral vagal parasympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system.

The safe & social state evolved within mammals and is important for optimizing the resources that the body has for health, growth and restoration. Examples include: homeostasis of bodily functions, hormone release, immune system and digestive system functioning. When the ventral vagal pathways are activated, our heart rate slows, we take fuller breaths into the belly, and we also have the ability to use our face and neck muscles.

When in the safe & social state, we **instantaneously socially engage** with others:

- closer proximity
- eye contact
- wider range of facial expression
- wider range of physical gestures and posture
- hear human voice more accurately, while tuning out other noises
- vocal prosody: stress, pitch, intonation, pauses, volume and pacing

**The world is:** safe, fun, peaceful, interesting, manageable

**Thoughts become:** understanding, empathetic, balanced, hopeful, curious

**Feelings of:** calm, happiness, connection, joy, motivation, excitement, relaxation, hope, awe

**Able to:** focus, plan, weigh options when making a decision, self-regulate and provide co-regulation, use play, be self-reflective