

# Trauma Chat Episode 11

Disclaimer: This is a verbatim transcript which may contain spelling errors.

[00:00:00] **Laura Reagan:** [00:00:00] Trauma Chat episode 11.

[00:00:02] Hi, welcome to Trauma Chat. I'm Laura Reagan, a clinical social worker, consultant, and coach, and the host of another podcast called Therapy Chat. I created trauma chat for you. It's for you, me and all of us. It's for anyone who wants to learn about what trauma is, and how it affects us, and how to heal.

[00:00:20] Trauma Chat is brought to you by the Trauma Therapist Network, a website and community to connect people with resources to heal from traumatic experiences. Learn more and sign up for our email at [www.traumatherapistnetwork.com](http://www.traumatherapistnetwork.com), you'll receive a free gift when you sign up.

[00:00:39] This podcast is for educational purposes only and is not a substitute for receiving help from a licensed mental health professional. The material in this podcast may be sensitive for many people. If you are listening and the information feels overwhelming, please pause and take good care of yourself before returning to listening. [00:01:00] Thank you.

[00:01:03] Hey again, welcome back. I'm Laura Reagan. And today going to give you the briefest of brief overviews of Polyvagal Theory. I'm really just going to focus on one aspect of Polyvagal Theory, which is The Polyvagal Ladder and that is a concept that Deb Dana LCSW came up with. Deb Dana has been a highly effective at translating Dr. Stephen Porges, his research into Polyvagal Theory, into language that clinicians and clients can understand. So part of that is she has at least two books on Polyvagal Theory. The Polyvagal Ladder is a really great way to understand what's happening inside of our brains when our trauma responses get activated.

[00:01:58] I talked last [00:02:00] episode about the Window of Tolerance, which was developed by Dan Siegel. And this goes kind of hand in hand with that. So the Window of Tolerance. It's the idea of a zone within which you are regulated. You were in your window of tolerance, or when you get dysregulated to hyper arousal or hypo arousal, you're out of your window of tolerance.

[00:02:24] But what Deb Dana explains with her Polyvagal Ladder is that the Vagus Nerve regulates both our trauma threat response activation system and the system of our body and brain that calms us down and helps us return to a relaxed state where we can be quote, safe and social. So the idea of the Polyvagal ladder is a ladder with three steps.

[00:02:55] The step at the top is safe and social. And that's [00:03:00] the ventral vagal state. The step in the middle is sympathetic activation, which is what we call the fight or flight response. And the step at the bottom is the dorsal vagal activation, which is hypo arousal. That's what on Dan Siegel's model of the window of tolerance, we would call hypo arousal.

[00:03:22] The hyper arousal from the window of tolerance would go on that middle step of the polyvagal ladder, the sympathetic response, which is the fight or flight response. So the polyvagal ladder, basically I find it extremely useful because it explains that when we are in a shutdown, we can't get back up into the safe and social zone until we go through the sympathetic activation.

[00:03:50] So part of what brings us out of that shut down, frozen can't speak, can't move, can't think, numb state, is getting [00:04:00] more sympathetic activation. So then we become very anxious or very angry. And the, that state can be so uncomfortable. Sometimes we try to calm ourselves back down, back down into the dorsal vagal hypo aroused state.

[00:04:15] And we get stuck between those two: the fight or flight, or the shutdown states, and never get up into that safe and social zone where we can really have connected relationships and feelings. So part of the process of coming out of the shutdown state is to move into that activated, anxious, or angry, state before you can move into the calmer state.

[00:04:42] So if you're actually feeling anxious or angry, you're closer to where you're trying to get to than if you're just numb and shut down. And oftentimes we don't like to feel anxious or angry. We can be more comfortable in the shutdown state, but we can't be relational from that [00:05:00] place. So I think that's very useful.

[00:05:03] I'm going to hopefully be able to use a graphic of the Polyvagal Ladder to include with this episode, I had a little trouble finding um an, image of it, but I'll definitely link to resources where you can get your own image if I can't find one to attach to this, the show notes for this episode. Thanks so much for listening. Talk to you soon.

[00:05:29] Thank you for listening to Trauma Chat today. I hope that you found some information that was helpful. For more information and resources, go to [www.traumachatpod.com](http://www.traumachatpod.com).

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[00:05:56] And I really want more people to find it because I think that trauma [00:06:00] is a major problem in our world. And by learning what it is, we can deep pathologize the symptoms that trauma brings, and people can get started on their path to healing. So thank you for being on this journey with me. And for more information and resources on trauma and healing from trauma, go to [www.traumatherapistnetwork.com](http://www.traumatherapistnetwork.com).

[00:06:28] Trauma Therapist network is a community for therapists and a place for anyone to go to learn more about trauma, and find resources, and connect with help. [www.traumatherapistnetwork.com](http://www.traumatherapistnetwork.com)