

Therapy Chat Episode 267



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[00:00:00] **Laura Reagan:** Therapy Chat Podcast Episode 267.

[00:00:04] **Announcer:** This is the Therapy Chat podcast with Laura Reagan LCSW-C. The information shared in this podcast is not a substitute for seeking help from a licensed mental health professional. And now here's your host, Laura Reagan LCSW-C.

[00:00:34] **Laura Reagan:** Hi, welcome back to Therapy Chat. I'm your host, Laura Reagan. This week, I'm thrilled to be bringing you another conversation with a guest who was on Therapy Chat all the way back in 2018 in episode 159, when she talks about her book, Polyvagal Theory in Therapy. Today, Deb is back to talk to us again [00:01:00] about Polyvagal Theory, and she explains this in more depth in a way that I think makes this complex theory very understandable and totally makes sense to me when I hear it and applies to my work with clients. So, I hope that you will find this informative. Everybody's talking about Polyvagal Theory lately, and that is due in large part to Deb Dana's work. Of course, Dr. Stephen Porges is the founder of Polyvagal Theory and he's brilliant.

[00:01:34] And Deb has done an amazing job of getting his information out to people who aren't as research oriented and may not understand the language that Dr. Porges uses when describing the theory. So very grateful to Deb for what she does. And I hope you will learn something. There will be a link to episode 159 in the show [00:02:00] notes.

[00:02:00] Take care.

[00:02:04] Hi, welcome back to Therapy Chat. I'm your host, Laura Reagan. And today I am so fortunate and honored to be speaking again with a guests who I first had on Therapy Chat back in 2018, in fact, episode 159, which was our first interview aired. Just almost exactly two years ago today, so I'm really excited to be talking with my guest, Deb Dana.

[00:02:32] Thanks so much for coming back to Therapy Chat today.

[00:02:34] **Deb Dana:** No, I'm happy to hear. It was interesting. You said almost two years. It's amazing, isn't it?

[00:02:39] **Laura Reagan:** I know. I was pretty shocked when I realized it had been that long actually. So I am really, really excited to talk to you about your two most recent publications, which are ,well in terms of books anyway, The Polyvagal Flip-Chart and Polyvagal [00:03:00] Exercises for Safety and Connection. But before we even dive into that, can we just start off by you telling our audience a little bit more about who you are and what you do?

[00:03:09] **Deb Dana:** Sure. I'm a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and at the moment, what I do is, um, I do consultation, I teach workshops, I help my colleagues come into this polyvagal informed way of working. So my direct

clinical practice has become almost none. I have a couple of clients left that keep on keeping on, but mostly what I do now is teach and do consultations.

[00:03:40] So, and since you and I talked last and I temporarily relocated from Maine, which was my home to outside of Chicago, to be closer to family during this pandemic time that we're in it's it was, uh, a moment when I really [00:04:00] listened to my nervous system and recognized how drained I was being, calling name, on my own, my husband and I, and having some health concerns and issues around that and really feeling, 'oh, my nervous system needs to be in contact with my daughter and son-in-law and grandkids.'

[00:04:19] And so we've made that move, which again, is an interesting experience to follow your nervous system in these times.

[00:04:29] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah, and I hope we can talk about that, just how Polyvagal Theory kind of relates to what we're going through in our world and in the U S right now. And, but I just want to say before we even go into that, first of all, I think it's beautiful that you were able to see and understand what your nervous system needed and follow that.

[00:04:52] **Deb Dana:** Yeah. I feel very fortunate to be able to do that. And, I really [00:05:00] felt we've been here now for about seven weeks and I can see all myself, coming back to life, feeling nourished again by human connection. And that's been a really powerful reminder to me that then we do need to listen, even though when we listen, we sometimes hear something that feels very scary.

[00:05:21] **Laura Reagan:** So true. And that's what, and I think really during this pandemic in particular, I feel that it has sort of forced me, can't say this is the same for everyone, but in my experience, it's forced me to really pay attention to what my nervous system is saying.

[00:05:36] And honor it because the, it was so strange for me when we made the decision to shift our I own a group practice. So the whole group, we shifted in a day from working in person to working only virtually and it's as if just making that change and deciding that I'm going to stay home for what we thought then would be two weeks.

[00:05:59] My [00:06:00] whole, it was as if the rug was pulled out from under me and my whole, in my mind, it's almost as if I was like running around in circles, screaming and just, frantic, and it was pretty humbling to witness what it did to me, just to have what, how I thought things were going to be and what I

thought was normal so abruptly change in this sense of this threat outside that was, so unknown and invisible. It's just, it really rocked my world.

[00:06:28] **Deb Dana:** And you are not alone in that. I think that's the common experience that, that the unpredictability and the unknown are cues of danger to our nervous system. And then often prompts that response of moving out of connection into a state of protection.

[00:06:46] And I was sort of smiling here on my end when you're saying, we thought it'd be for two weeks and here we are. I don't know how many months later, but we're, we're in this for the long haul I think, for awhile. And so we're trying to figure out how do we find our way to safety in [00:07:00] this time where so many cues of danger are coming at us all the time.

[00:07:04] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. It's for me, it's been helpful to sort of anchor myself and what understanding I have of Polyvagal Theory, which I also want to say you have really been a driving force in helping Stephen Porges's theory be more understandable to the public and to clinical professionals.

[00:07:27] It's, it's such a, I'm trying to find the right words, but it's such a important contribution to our understanding. And I'm so grateful that you it's like your a translator. I think I probably said this last time, but it's like, he figured this out and then you can put it into words and practices that make it really digestible. Cause it's some really heady stuff.

[00:07:52] **Deb Dana:** Yeah. So thank you for that. That touches me when, when you say that it is my passion and purpose to be a [00:08:00] translator of Stephen's, brilliant work. It is a brilliant, elegant theory Polyvagal theory. And I think as we esteem, it is in reading Steve's science can be challenging for clinicians. And so to, to translate it and to bring it into ways that we can use in our office, we can use with our clients that are easy, that are ways that we can then help our clients learn to become active operators of their own nervous systems and to shape their systems towards safety and connection is, really is my joy. So, thank you for recognizing that. I appreciate that.

[00:08:44] **Laura Reagan:** Your very welcome. And it's just really just genuine and completely sincere. I think it would be a good idea if we could kind of begin our conversation with you giving maybe a little overview of [00:09:00] Polyvagal Theory for people who are listening, who really haven't even heard of it or, maybe they've just heard the phrase Polyvagal Theory, but they don't get what it is. And I know you might remember a lot of our audience is clinicians. And then probably about a third of people who listen, are people who are just

interested in learning more about psychology and mental health, but don't have a clinical background. So, I think that would be a helpful starting point just to make sure everybody's on the same page as for listening.

[00:09:27] **Deb Dana:** Great. Let's do that. And I love that you have both a clinical audience and what I call curious human beings. Um, Polyvagal theory is a theory of the autonomic nervous system. So it is something that every human being, I think should understand. It's the nervous system is at the heart of our daily experience. And so understanding how it works helps us understand how we're moving, how we're navigating through our days. Polyvagal Theory in the way that I [00:10:00] teach it has three organizing principles: hierarchy, neuroception, and co-regulation.

[00:10:06] And hierarchies is, important for us to understand it is the three states of the nervous system that we move in and out of every day, many, many times a day. The state that helps us do what you and I are doing right now, be in connection, and communicate and feel safe enough to do this is ventral. I call it the system of connection and communication, but it's the central system, central vagal. And then the second system, that's the newest system. The next oldest system is the sympathetic nervous system, which most of us know as fight or flight. Right? We call it the system of mobilization because it brings us this energy to, to take action.

[00:10:46] And then the third system, which is the oldest part of our nervous system, is this dorsal vagal system, the system of collapse, or shut down or demobilization and the energy drains from your system where you [00:11:00] kind of go through the world, not really having enough energy to care or be really there. And you might feel that as I'm talking, because I can feel it as I'm just talking.

[00:11:07] So let's come back to ventral for a moment and come back to that connection. This state of ventral is where we have access to a range of emotion, and to, to a range of behaviors in a range of stories, right? This is where we're in this state of healthy homeostasis.

[00:11:30] Everything is working well. And even though the world that we're living in is filled with cues of danger, we can stay anchored in this place of safe enough, so that I can move through the world in an organized way. And what we see in our world nowadays is that anchoring and ventral in that place is really challenging.

[00:11:53] We look at the news, or we wander through our towns, then, we look at our family members and we see people who are [00:12:00] pulled into that sympathetic fight-flight that, that overwhelming disorganized, chaotic energy that comes out as anger, anxiety, or some flavor of, I have to do something.

[00:12:15] The other place we see people are in is in that dorsal despair, hopeless give up, we're never going to get out of this. So we see the states come alive in our own system many times a day, and it's being visibly played out on our TVs and in our, in our communities, right? We see the states in, in extremes.

[00:12:35] So that's hierarchy. And the other thing I wanted to mention was neuroception because what we're getting, in our cues of safety and danger is neuroception. Neuroception is the way the nervous system receives these cues, through three streams of awareness through, internal experience-so inside, what's happening in your body, through the environment around you, and through the connection with another person through [00:13:00] nervous system to nervous system. And that awareness is always happening in the nervous system. So I say awareness, it really is not a thinking brain awareness, it's an embodied nervous system awareness, which is why Steve created that word, neuroception. Neuro for nervous system and ception for awareness, the nervous systems ways of listening.

[00:13:21] And what's happening, for most of us now is that we're being bombarded by cues of danger all the time. And we're seeking cues of safety. We're looking for 'where do I find the cues of safety?' Because there has to be a balance in order for us to come to that place of ventral connection. You know if the cues of danger outweigh the cues of safety, we are automatically going to be taken to one of those survival responses, to mobilized action in sympathetic or immobilized collapse in dorsal. So we are, we're always working with that equation. I need to have my cues of safety outweigh the cues of danger.

[00:13:59] And [00:14:00] so again, we're seeing that play out every day. When we feel it in our minds as we listen to the news or the what you can, and can't do changes day to day, cues of danger. And what we usually look for cues of safety, is we look for what this third organizing principle is, we look for co-regulation. We look for a connection to other human beings.

[00:14:21] That's the way we're built. We're wired that way. And in this moment in time, it's become, being around other human beings is all of the sudden a cue of danger. And so what we need in order to survive, we need human connection

with other mammals is also activating a survival response. It's not safe. So it's an odd sort of juxtaposition that we're in at the moment.

[00:14:44] **Laura Reagan:** Oh, that's so true. And yeah, and I mean, there's this isolation that so many people are feeling because they want and need to connect more with other people and can't. In terms of, you know, the number of people you can surround yourself [00:15:00] with. And I just think about people who I'm fortunate that, if you say I'm quarantining, I mean, I go some places, but I don't, I don't go many places.

[00:15:10] And here in my house, I have my husband, my dog, and so I'm never alone. Very rarely, but, um, so I think we're, co-regulating each other, but it's, it's a foreign feeling to go outside, to maybe go to the grocery store. And when someone comes near you suddenly, it feels like they're a threat. And for me, that's not the way I was operating before this all started.

[00:15:37] And now it's like, oh, this person's too close. What if they have it? I don't want to get it. And it just becomes this like, Either fear or anger. I'm seeing that so much in what other people are talking about too, that and everything that you're seeing on the news, as you said, like who's bad, who's good.

[00:15:56] Who who's safe. Who can you trust? You know, there's [00:16:00] just so much of a sense of fear of other people. Um, whether it's politically or, uh, uh, down racial lines or, you know,

[00:16:10] **Deb Dana:** We move move into a 'us versus them' place as soon as we leave ventral again, ventral is the only place, not more in that state of safety and connection. That's the only place where we can look out and see another as a, as a fellow human and have curiosity and compassion for that person. As soon as we leave ventral and go to sympathetic. You in ventral are my friend and I'm happy to be in connection with it and enjoying the connection. As soon as I go to sympathetic, you're now dangerous to me. The world's dangerous and filled with dangerous people. Not because I want it to be, but because my biology takes me to that place, my biology has taken me to a survival state. And so it's not allowing me to see you as, as friendly [00:17:00] and safe, right? So that's what we see happening that we have these divisions us, them, me, you.

[00:17:07] And then in dorsal, if we get taken down to dorsal to that place of despair, some flavor of disappearing, then the world and the people in it aren't really, even, they're fuzzy, they're, foggy, because in a numb place they don't really even exist. So again, I can't be curious about the world around me

because in dorsal, I'm sort of untethered from it. It doesn't really exist. And in sympathetic it's too dangerous. So we can see the necessity of essential necessity of coming to ventral, being able to find our way there and anchor there for the seat, bone and the place that, change can happen.

[00:17:49] **Laura Reagan:** Oh, goodness. So much change is needed so much, so much less us and them is needed.

[00:17:55] **Deb Dana:** Yeah. So that's really when I'm in my [00:18:00] work, helping people befriend their nervous system and then shape it in new ways, that the overarching purpose is: this is how we're going to change the world. One nervous system at a time. Because I go to ventral and anchor there, and then I extend cues of welcome to my neuroceptive cues to you, and your system picks that up and we come into connection. You can feel it rippling out into the world, right?

[00:18:26] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. It's just astounding the different states that we can experience throughout a day and how, when you're in each state, it feels like that's the only way so if you're in a fear place, it's like, no, the world's not safe. And if you're in a connected place, it's like, everything's fine. I'm doing everything's gonna be fine. And it's just amazing how that can shift. It's incredible.

[00:18:52] **Deb Dana:** We want people to understand that this is not your brain doing this. This is your [00:19:00] biology. It's not that you want to be in danger or safe, it's in your biology gets these cues and takes you to a state where what emerges from that state is that story, right? The story of if the world is dangerous, then there are very few stories that I can enter into there, but if the world is safe or safe enough, I'm okay, not, not blissful, wonderful, everything's fine because that's a little hard in this day and age. But if the world is safe enough, I'm okay, then there are all sorts of possibilities and options that will come to life. And that's the, again, the beauty of ventral that when you're in that place, there are possibilities you never would've thought off before- things appear, stories come, opportunities. You begin to move in a different way, see things in a different way.

[00:19:53] **Laura Reagan:** Thank you for explaining that. And how can, I guess probably what would be the most [00:20:00] helpful to talk about, I think is how can we shape our nervous system, as you mentioned to stay more in ventral? Even is it possible during, when there's a worldwide pandemic, there's social unrest, contested election, is how can, is it possible? And can you give us any like tips?

[00:20:25] **Deb Dana:** Yes, it is possible. And I can probably give you some tips, but I just want to start with. It is possible. And you know, what I want, I want us to remember is that our nervous system has an inherent, longing to be in that place of ventral connection. And I believe has an inherent knowing how to get there.

[00:20:49] So whenever we're shaping our own systems or helping clients shape their systems, I like to say we're just reminding the nervous system. It knows the way. Right? [00:21:00] We don't have to create something brand new. Right? We're just uncovering the pathways. And then traveling them over and over so that those become our predictable pathways.

[00:21:10] So the nervous system knows the way I call it home, knows the way home to ventral . And it's just our job to keep traveling those pathways and the shaping of the nervous system is done by doing small things, over and over, that's really the focus of *The Polyvagal Exercises Book*, because we don't cheat the nervous system by going to therapy one hour a weekend, and then doing nothing in between, right? That's not how the nervous system works.

[00:21:38] The nervous system likes these continual connections, bringing ventral energy to the moment so that we can move in a different way. So the work really becomes to do something in a session with a client or to experiment with one of these exercises and then to find a way to [00:22:00] keep using it over and over and over and track how your nervous system is responding.

[00:22:05] In the *Polyvagal Exercises book* , I think they're 50 exercises, your nervous system is not going to be attracted to all of those. Right? So in each session, there are a bunch of different ways to shape the system to connect in certain sort of certain pathways, because even when I was writing, it was like some of them I really loved. And other ones that were like, ooo I have some clients that love this one, doesn't really work for my nervous system. So one of the things I would encourage all of your listeners to do is really pay attention to what your own nervous system is saying, and honor what it's, what it's telling you.

[00:22:43] And when I started thinking about the pandemic in my inbox all the time, I would get suggestions on five ways to survive today, seven things to do to whatever. And I would read them. And I would think wow one of those, [00:23:00] my nervous system says yes to and the other ones. No, thank you. Right. So whenever we're exploring exercises or recommendations from other people, listen to your own nervous system because your nervous system, is going to let you know. Oh, that one, that one's a, yes. You just say yes then dive

in. That one's a no, if it's a true no, set it aside, you don't need it. If it's a maybe, experiment with it.

[00:23:26] So in the polyvagal exercises, most people find lots of things they really enjoy doing, and they can create some practices around that. And they find ones that they know. I get emails sometimes that say, I don't understand why you wrote this one. It doesn't work for me. Right? So, and that's lovely because every nervous system is going to have its own way of reshaping. Our job in the beginning is what I call befriending. Right? It's the information gathering. It's the getting to know the nervous system, getting to [00:24:00] know how does it, how does it function? How does it take me in and out of states? What do those states feel like? How do I know I'm in a state?

[00:24:07] That's what really, the, a lot of the beginning, part of the exercises in the new book is the information gathering. You have to befriend, get to know. And I, I like to say, when we make a friend, you don't just do one thing and then you have a friend, right? Friendship takes tending, takes care. And so befriending the nervous system. This is the same sort of experience. Right? You don't just turn towards it once and you're done. Right? These are on going autonomic conversations that we're having all the time. If we stop right now and just tune in side to our nervous system and then sort of notice what state am I in right now? Now, where we are, am I, and listen for a moment, we would get some interesting information and then we could do that again 10 minutes from now, and it would be very different information. So it's this ongoing flow, that we [00:25:00] want to be able to be in, right? So that we can listen when my nervous system is taking us to a survival response, to be curious about what just happened? Right? What was the cues that took me into this place?

[00:25:14] Because then maybe I can reduce that cue or resolve it. And the thing about the nervous system is we need to both reduce cues of danger or resolve the world we're in today. Probably reducing them is what we're talking about, and we have to also actively experience cues of safety, right? So this is a both, in order to come to wellbeing and anchor in that place of ventral, we need both. So it's not simply staying inside and staying away from people or wearing a mask all the time or any of those things that, that reduce the cues of danger. It's also one of the cues of safety that nourish my nervous system, because I need both. Right. And if we go back to my personal experience, I was reducing the cues of danger when I was [00:26:00] home by having people help with grocery delivery and then not going in, taking care in all those ways. But I wasn't having an experience of the cues of safety. And so I could feel that I was moving more and more to my dorsal place, which is where I go when I'm feeling the overwhelm of the world. And the more I was in dorsal, the more

difficult it was to even notice any cues of safety around and that's the loop that gets created and probably people listening and can identify with that, that loop, that the more you get into a survival state, the less able you are to feel a connection or even know that there's a cue of safety that's being offered to you.

[00:26:46] So interrupting that is is sort of the, the second step we befriend, but then we track so that we know where we are and then we can begin to interrupt and shape in a different way. So it's a lovely [00:27:00] process of of deepening into this connection with my nervous system, listening, and then having some ways that I can offer my nervous system to get out of this place of either danger or disappearing, where I find myself. And so, that's really how the book came about was that clients were doing so well in working sessions, but they were saying, 'so what can I do in between', right? Because people really want to know that they are actively engaging in this work.

[00:27:34] Right? And especially now, when everything seems to be out of our hands and out of control, it's lovely to have some practices that you can turn to every day. And as you're doing them, you are shaping your nervous system towards more health and wellbeing, right? Physical health and psychological. So, you know, I've discovered from my clients, they really do love to have, we call it [00:28:00] Home Play.

[00:28:01] **Laura Reagan:** Not homework, home play

[00:28:02] **Deb Dana:** Yeah. My colleague, Amber Gray created that term home play and she lets me use it, I love that because homework can be a cue of danger, right?

[00:28:11] **Laura Reagan:** Right.

[00:28:12] **Deb Dana:** If you say, oh, what's my homework if you feel, oh, no too much. But home play is oh, okay. Maybe. Right. So home play. And when you have a home play assignment that, that invites you to just be with just to get to know, it's a lovely beginning, right? It's a lovely beginning to, to get to know. And then you would ask, so what do we do to shape?

[00:28:36] So one of my favorite exercises from Polyvagal exercises is the central vagal anchors that I think is so universally helpful. And it simply is finding a who, a what, a where, and a when that brings your ventral alive, you know? So we'd start with, who's a person in your life [00:29:00] who when you're around them, you feel that sense of safety and an invitation to connect?

[00:29:05] Right? And we would identify one who, right? And for many of us, if people have been the dangers in our life, the who might be a pet like you have a dog your dog is one of your "who's" I imagine, right?

[00:29:18] **Laura Reagan:** Yes, yes, yes.

[00:29:20] **Deb Dana:** So we find these who's and then we have, and I would say that once we found out a living, breathing mammal that we identify as, a who, we also have ancestors, we have spiritual beings, spiritual figures we have all sorts of other "who's" that we also feel that connection. I just like, in the beginning to have it be a living, breathing, other nervous system, that we can feel our connection with. So its a who, and then a what is a very simple thing that you do that when you do it you feel that moment, even a micro moment of safety and connection.

[00:29:57] Right? For many of us, it has something to do in [00:30:00] nature because nature is pretty predictably activating about you know, I can just look out the window and there's a micro moment of a reminder of ventral. So you find a who and then a what, where. Where's a place in your world where you feel that welcome, that place to feel safe, safe and connected. The, where has been challenging for people recently, because many of our wheres are no longer accessible to us.

[00:30:24] When I was still in Maine, the beach was my where always. For several months, my where was not available to me because the beach and most of the beach were closed. So, you know, we are looking for where's all the time. The other day a colleague said her, her client could not identify a where. He came back the next week and he said he made a where, he made a where on the corner of his house. Right? So that's kind of a simple place where you feel safe and okay.

[00:30:53] And then the when. When's a moment, a predictably reoccurring moment when you feel [00:31:00] a bit of a micro-movement to ventral? And I really like to emphasize, micro-moment. These are not long, extended periods of being, feeling safe, connected. Okay? These are micro-moments, that's all we need. And so when is your micro-moment ?

[00:31:15] And the people who know me, know that my when is very early in the morning. I'm an early morning person, so I call it the before the world wakes up moment, right? So every morning I connect to this "when" that's an anchor. So, it's just, it needs a way to sort of begin to get to know your nervous system and your nervous system will let you know, here are these four categories and

here's something that you can count on that will bring you that micro-moment of safety and connection.

[00:31:44] So that's one that I love and clients seem to really they're able to do that one. It's not too big, a stretch for their nervous systems. It's a lovely sort of, and then it's a resource, right, then you go practice, you've created your [00:32:00] anchor. Okay so every day, grab an anchor and see what happens. The more we grab our anchors, the more our nervous system is reminded, oh, 'I know how to get to ventral.' right? So in those moments, when we feel a big challenge to our nervous system, we've already reminded the nervous system, it knows how to get home to ventral, and it's going to more easily find its way there.

[00:32:20] **Laura Reagan:** That's a beautiful example and very simple. I really appreciate that. And I'm wondering just for clarification, can it be to envision that place or do you have to like see it?

[00:32:32] **Deb Dana:** Yeah, no once it's already been wired into your system. So I'd like it to be a place you already have actually been at...

[00:32:42] **Laura Reagan:** like the beach for you?

[00:32:43] **Deb Dana:** Like the beach for me, and now the beach can still be my anchor because I can envision it. Cause now I'm 16 hours away from the beach now, but I can bring the beach alive in my mind, in my imagination, I can hear it. Right? I just bought a candle that has a [00:33:00] sort of a salty beach smell. I can smell it. Right? So I can bring the life in those ways. And it's in its first iteration we want it to be something you've actually experienced because then it's just, you're reminding you're nervous system we've had this experience. Right? It's not imaginary. We're not making it up. You've had this experience, it's wired into your biology and you're just bringing the live again. Yeah.

[00:33:22] **Laura Reagan:** Thank you for explaining that. And then I have another question about that, which is, I don't want to be controversial, but I'm just wondering, like, what if what if the shutdown is where you feel safe, so you're not in ventral, but that feels safe, you know?

[00:33:38] **Deb Dana:** Yeah I do and I get this question a lot and it is a fascinating one to tease out with somebody because dorsal, that, that place of collapse, shut down, disconnect, right? I call it some flavor of disappearing because I'm sort of becoming invisible and we can [00:34:00] see it as a relief from the overwhelming sympathetic energy.

[00:34:07] Right? So if you're rescued from the sympathetic overwhelm of that disorganized, chaotic world, So in that way, it's a relief from that, but it doesn't nurture your nervous system. So we want to discern the difference between an escape or a rescue from sympathetic, and the feeling of being safe and filled, because that rescue is still draining your system. It's not filling your system. Ventral fills. Right? So the dorsal rescue from the overall 'get me out of here,' it is needed in the moment and gets us out of that place that feels unmanageable, but it doesn't fill us.

[00:34:49] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. I think I'm understanding that the distinction you're making and I think like I was thinking about what if for you, you said, um, you, [00:35:00] when is this time before everyone wakes up to me, I don't want to, I don't like being awake that early. So, when I think about I wake up and I'm in bed, I feel so comfortable and good. And just, it's not hiding. It's safely nestled, relaxed, comfortable, curious, open, you know?

[00:35:25] **Deb Dana:** And then if you, you know, go to bed and pull up the covers to escape.

[00:35:30] **Laura Reagan:** Right. Which I could also, sometimes it would be like, I'd rather, I can't handle anything, I just wish I could get in bed and pull the covers over my head. But that's not the same feeling at all.

[00:35:39] **Deb Dana:** Exactly. Exactly. It's a necessary survival , response sometimes. So we want to honor the wisdom of the nervous system and in bringing you that, and we want to feel the difference between waking up and feeling that nestled and cozy that wanting to stay there because of that [00:36:00] and feeling so, wanting to stay under the covers because the world's too much.

[00:36:04] **Laura Reagan:** Thank you. You know, like, I think intellectually, I, I know slash knew that before asking, but when I think sometimes I, I think this isn't just me and in our culture, it's common, but that we judge resting as like being shut down or being lazy or something. When it's just, it's restorative and nourishing for our bodies, but, like this. And then there's this way of judging whatever state of our Polyvagal System we're in too. Like, you know, ventral is what we wants because thats...

[00:36:39] **Deb Dana:** Right, right. And I want to thank you for bringing it up because I do want to say none of us can stay in ventral all the time, nor is that the goal we're reaching right? Distress, the suffering comes when we get pulled out of ventral into one of the survival states and get [00:37:00] stuck there.

Right? It's not that we get pulled out, we get pulled out for good reason and it's when we get stuck there. And that's the experience of many of our clients and many of us recently in this timeline we're going through where we get into survival and then we can't find our way home to ventral. So it's in the knowing that I've left and knowing that I have pathways home that brings, um, resilience, right?

[00:37:25] A flexible, nervous system is a resilient system. Right? And so that's what we're really looking for. And the other thing I wanted to say is that the nervous system doesn't make moral meaning out of where it takes us, it doesn't assign motivation, right? We humans do that, our brains do that. But the nervous system is simply enacting response in response to the cues of safety and danger it's feeling in those three pathways inside, outside, between. So if we can stay out of that judgment and just stay in curiosity, then [00:38:00] we can shape our system.

[00:38:03] **Laura Reagan:** That's so helpful. I love the way you speak about this. It's just so gentle and clear, and I am really grateful for you, what you're doing is so important. Oh my gosh. I just can't even overstate it. Well, Deb, it's been a joy to have you back on Therapy Chat today. I think that you've given, I think some hopeful information that I hope will help everyone who's listening.

[00:38:29] **Deb Dana:** I hope so. Again, hope is an emerging property of ventral, and hope is what I hold on too. Right? I anchor in ventral and I feel that hope. And in my first book I wrote that my favorite word is yet. So it just. So, you know, talk about that again for a moment, just put yet at the end of the sentence. Right. I can't find my way to safety and connection, yet. Right. I, I can't get out of [00:39:00] the survival response, yet. I can't see the way forward, yet. Right? Because we're all in that yet together and we're, we will find that way. We will find our way to those micro-moments of ventral. And those micro-moments begin to accumulate and sooner or later, your nervous system begins to respond in a new way because of those accumulated micro-moments of ventral.

[00:39:27] **Laura Reagan:** That's beautiful. And that is so hopeful. And I really appreciate that. So, Deb, I know that we can get your books on Amazon, but where can people find everything you're doing? Of course, not just Amazon, but any place that books are sold, but where can people find what you're doing if they want consultation with you or they want to see videos of you or things like that?

[00:39:52] **Deb Dana:** Yeah. If you go to my website, which is rhythmofregulation.com, lots of stuff there, [00:40:00] podcasts like this one, interviews, youtube, all sorts of things, and a list of all the workshops and trainings that, that I'm doing, which nowadays anybody in the world can come to you because they are all online...

[00:40:14] **Laura Reagan:** That's definitely an unintended positive consequence.

[00:40:17] **Deb Dana:** Yeah, and I've heard that from a lot of colleagues, it says wow it opens up the ability to, to take trainings that, that we didn't have before. So yeah, I'm holding on to that one. That's a hopeful one too.

[00:40:29] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. So much hope in everything you've shared. And I really, really appreciate you once again. I'll just thank you for being my guest.

[00:40:37] **Deb Dana:** Thank you so much. This has been it was a delight to, to be with you and to continue our conversation.

[00:40:44] **Announcer:** Thank you for listening to Therapy Chat with your host, Laura Reagan LCSW-C. For more information, please visit therapychatpodcast.com.