

Protective Nervous System States

As your body responds to safety and threat, it shifts among three *protective states*.

MOBILIZATION

Sympathetic nervous system activates to protect you through action.

Safety Response: Energetic, active, motivated, and playful.

Threat Response: Anxiety, irritability, racing thoughts, muscle tension, restlessness, and feeling stuck in *fight or flight*.

ENGAGEMENT

Ventral vagal nerve activates to protect you through social engagement.

Safety Response: Calm, curious, connected, flexible, present, and clarity.

Threat Response: Stress or fear while remaining able to pause, adapt, connect with support, and respond intentionally, includes *fawning*.

IMMOBILIZATION

Dorsal vagal nerve activates to protect you through energy conservation.

Safety Response: Restful, reflective, dreamy, or meditative.

Threat Response: Numbness, exhaustion, disconnection, hopelessness, and feeling stuck in *freeze or flop*.

PROTECTIVE STATES REFLECTION:

- *How does my body tend to move between protective states?*
- *Which protective state am I noticing right now?*
- *What might my nervous system be trying to do for me right now?*
- *What might it be protecting me from?*
- *What does my nervous system need from me right now?*