

# **Polyvagal Teen What's Your State? Cards - Empowering Teenagers and Fostering Family Communication**

The teenage years are a time of immense growth, self-discovery, and navigating the complexities of emotions and relationships. Effective communication and emotional regulation become essential skills for teenagers and their families to cultivate during this transformative period. The What's My State - Polyvagal Teen Cards, inspired by the principles of the Polyvagal Theory, provide a valuable tool for tracking and understanding emotional states and how they link to behaviours and our bodies somatic experience.

By incorporating these cards into a routine or ritual for tracking states, young people, especially teenagers, and their families can experience a range of benefits that enhance communication, foster self-awareness, and promote harmonious relationships.

The Polyvagal Theory, developed by Dr. Stephen Porges, sheds light on the autonomic nervous system's responses within social interactions. It emphasizes the importance of feeling safe and connected in facilitating healthy relationships and effective communication. According to the theory, individuals experience different physiological and emotional states, ranging from mobilized (fight-or-flight) to immobilized (freeze) to safe and social (rest-and-digest) states.

Polyvagal Teen Cards are a practical and engaging tool designed to help teenagers and their families track and understand these different states. Each card represents a specific nervous system state and behaviour, providing a visual and tactile representation of the teenager's current internal experience.

By incorporating these cards into a routine or ritual, teenagers can regularly check in with their emotion, express their feelings, and engage in open dialogue with their families.

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The benefits of utilizing Polyvagal Teen Cards and integrating them into a routine or ritual for tracking states are numerous:

- **Increased Emotional Awareness:** Polyvagal Teen Cards promote emotional awareness among teenagers by encouraging them to identify and label their current emotional state. This process deepens their understanding of their own emotional landscape, enhances their emotional intelligence, and fosters self-reflection.
- **Enhanced Communication Skills:** Regularly using Polyvagal Teen Cards within family routines or rituals encourages open and honest communication. Teenagers can articulate their emotional states to their family members using the cards as a visual aid, facilitating effective expression of their feelings and promoting deeper understanding and empathy.
- **Strengthened Family Bonds:** Engaging in the practice of tracking states with Polyvagal Teen Cards strengthens the bonds between teenagers and their families. It creates a safe space for teenagers to express themselves and be heard, fostering a sense of belonging and support within the family unit. Family members can learn to recognize and validate each other's emotional experiences, nurturing empathy and connection.
- **Empowered Self-Regulation:** The regular use of Polyvagal Teen Cards empowers teenagers with tools for self-regulation and emotional well-being. By tracking their states, teenagers can gain insight into their physiological and emotional responses and develop strategies to regulate their emotions effectively. This promotes resilience, reduces stress, and supports overall mental and emotional health.
- **Lifelong Emotional Skills:** Utilizing Polyvagal Teen Cards during adolescence provides teenagers with a foundation of emotional skills that can benefit them throughout their lives. By learning to identify and manage their emotional states, they develop lifelong tools for healthy communication, conflict resolution, and self-care.

Incorporating Polyvagal Teen Cards into a routine or ritual for tracking states offers a powerful way to empower teenagers, improve communication within families, and foster emotional well-being. By engaging in this practice, young people and their families cultivate self-awareness, empathy, and resilience, creating a supportive and nurturing environment during the transformative teenage years. The Polyvagal Teen What's Your State Cards are a valuable resource to enhance our connections and promote emotional growth in teenagers, fostering harmonious family relationships and empowering young individuals along their journey of self-discovery.

# 55 conversation prompts to use with the What's My State? Polyvagal Teen® Card deck

Here are some question prompts for each state:

## Safe and Social:

- What does feeling safe and connected to others look like for you?
- What are some things that make you feel safe and connected?
- How can you create more opportunities to feel safe and connected in your daily life?
- What are some ways you can use the "safe and social" state to support others?
- How do you feel when you are in a safe and social state?

## Mobilised:

- What does it feel like when you are in a mobilised state?
- What are some experiences that push you into a mobilised state?
- How can you manage and regulate your energy levels when you feel mobilised?
- How can you channel your mobilised energy in positive helpful ways?
- What are some healthy ways to release excess energy when you are in a mobilised state?

## Immobilized:

- What does it feel like for you when you are immobilised and shut down?
- What are some situations or activators that can leave you to go into an immobilised state?
- How can you identify when you are entering an immobilised state?
- What are some strategies you can use to help yourself come out of an immobilised state?
- How can you build a sense of safety and connection to help prevent or minimise immobilisation? Is there anyone you can ask for support? How would you ask them? Would asking them feel too uncomfortable?

Remember, these questions are meant to promote self-awareness and exploration, and they are not a substitute for professional mental health support.

# 55 conversation prompts to use with the What's My State? Card deck

**Here are 40 further question prompts for teenagers and tweens to use with the Polyvagal Teen® Emotions and Behaviour Discussion Cards:**

- Have you ever experienced a time when you were angry? Can you remember what happened?
- Have you ever experienced a time when you felt nervous or anxious? What did that feel like in your body? You can insert the feeling or sensation with the card they pick.
- Can you think of a time when you felt proud of yourself? How did that feel in your body?
- What does it mean to feel calm? Can you describe a time when you felt calm?
- Have you ever felt like your emotions were out of control? How did you handle that situation?
- What does it mean to be mindful? Can you explain a time when you were mindful?
- Have you ever felt like you didn't belong? How did that feel and how did you cope with that feeling?
- Can you think of a time when you felt angry? How did you manage that emotion in a healthy way?
- What does it mean to be build strong connections? What do you think helps building strong connections?
- Have you ever felt like you were in danger? How did your body respond?
- Can you think of a time when you felt happy? How did that feel in your body?
- What does it mean to feel safe? Can you describe a time when you felt safe?
- Have you ever experienced a time when you felt overwhelmed? How did you manage that feeling?
- Can you explain what it means to have empathy for others? Give an example of when you showed empathy towards someone.
- Have you ever experienced a time when you felt helpless? How did you cope with that feeling?
- Can you think of a time when you felt grateful? How did that feel in your body?
- What does it mean to be kind to others? Can you give an example of when you showed kindness towards someone?
- Have you ever experienced a time when you felt disappointed? How did you manage that feeling?
- Can you explain what it means to be self-aware? Give an example of when you were self-aware.
- Have you ever experienced a time when you felt rejected? How did you cope with that feeling?

# 55 conversation prompts to use with the What's My State? Polyvagal Teen® Card deck

- **Here are 50 question prompts for teenagers and tweens to use with the Polyvagal Teen Emotions and Behaviour Discussion Cards:**
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- Can you think of a time when you felt loved? Who leaves you feeling loved?
- What does it mean to have healthy boundaries? Can you give an example of when you set a healthy boundary?
- Have you ever felt like you were not enough? How did you manage that feeling?
- When you feel unloved - how does it show up in your behaviour?
  - in your thought?
  - in your body?
- Can you explain what it means to be patient? Give an example of when you showed patience.
- Have you ever experienced a time when you felt like you didn't fit in? How did you cope with that feeling? Was it healthy your coping strategy?
- Can you think of a time when you felt calm in a stressful situation? How did you manage to stay calm?
- When you have forgotten a piece of work or folder or homework you need to hand in - what thoughts go through your mind? Does your behaviour change towards the person who you are accountable to?
- What does it mean to have healthy communication? Can you give an example of when you communicated in a healthy way?
- Have you ever felt like you were judged by others? How did you manage that feeling?
- Can you explain what it means to be responsible? Give an example of when you showed responsibility.
- Have you ever experienced a time when you felt misunderstood? How did you cope with that feeling?
- Can you think of a time when you felt confident? How did you show that to the outside world?
- What does it mean to be self-compassionate? Can you give an example of when you showed self-compassion?
- Have you ever felt like you were in a situation that was out of your control? How did you cope with that feeling?
- Can you explain what it means to be open-minded? Give an example of when you were open-minded.
- Have you ever experienced feeling like giving up? What type of things leave you wanting to give up? What motivates you not to give up?
- When people ask you if you are okay how do you usually respond?
- When you get asked a question and you don't know the answer - what thoughts go through your mind?
- What is your favourite state to be in and why?