

# **What's My State?**

## **The Polyvagal Teen® Card Deck: ideas for using**

**The Polyvagal Teen® Card Deck is used best when the safe adult has some basic knowledge of the 3 principles of Polyvagal Theory - the hierarchy, neuroception and co-regulation.**

### **Using the cards as a check in**

In each set of cards there duplicate copies of the same images. The set can be split up and 1 set be kept in a bowl and at the start of each session a card could be picked up as a check in to identify where the young person is right now. This can be helpful for the young person to browse through the cards especially if they find it difficult to get started in conversation during a therapy session call.

### **How's my week been?**

Ask the young person to pick three cards that resemble the last seven days. with gentle curiosity explore with the young person why they have picked these cards and how it has impacted them - stories, sensations in body, feelings and behaviours.

### **Managing difficult behaviours in others**

Ask the young person to pick a behaviour they find most difficult to deal with in other people - the other people could be friends, family, teachers, authority for example. Explore with curiosity why they find it difficult and then ask them to pick another card on how they would respond to the other person's behaviour. If appropriate then ask them to pick another card on how this person responds to their last response.

Explore with the young person if they can see a pattern in their behaviours.

- Are they happy with their response?
- Would they change their response in hindsight in anyway?
- Would it be helpful to change their response? Maybe roleplay their new response in session and ask them to practice it during the week and in the next session have a check in and explore what happened when they tried out their new response.
- If they didn't try out their new response explore with them what stopped them and how it impacted their week.

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### Introducing the States of Polyvagal Theory

Once you have had a chance to use the cards a couple of times with the young person, you can point out that the cards are colour-coded and then go on to explain about how our nervous system responds in different ways to stress.

Go on to explain the yellow cards are our behaviours common when we feel safe and are not under stress. Browse through the cards the young person and ask them to pick cards they can relate to. Explore with gentle curiosity why have they picked the particular card and what it means to them

The red cards are when we are under stress, don't feel safe and our bodies go into a high energy defensive state and the blue cards are when we go into a defensive low energy state.

Explore using the back of the cards how our bodies responses can change when we are under stress and explore with them if they can relate to any of these responses. This can be an opportunity to explore how different situations eg being asked a question in class in front of everyone else, forgetting their homework, being late can impact how their body responds.

### Tracking States:

The tracking states worksheets are used to help identify the different states they go through during the week all day. Tracking states helps the young person to become aware how their body and behaviour is impacted by stress.

This is an information gathering process which is encouraged to become a routine or ritual almost. Once information has been gathered on the States tracker the young person can browse through the cards to identify behaviours on the tracker. They can then explore for example what happened, how it impacted them and others, what they would change, what they would not change, what kept them there, what took them out of that behaviour.

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### **Sensations in my Body**

Identifying sensations in their body can help the young person become more attuned to noticing cues of stress and safety.

Once there is a particular challenging behaviour identified such as for example hibernating or shouting helping them explore the sensations in the body can raise awareness and connection.

The two worksheets on the next page can help them connect with their body whilst exploring the impact of stress. They can be printed out.

### **The R.U.D Process**

The R.U.D is a three step process framework to help work through the key principles of polyvagal theory. The cards are a key component and used in helping young people to

#### **1. Recognise**

- STATES
- STORIES
- SENSATIONS

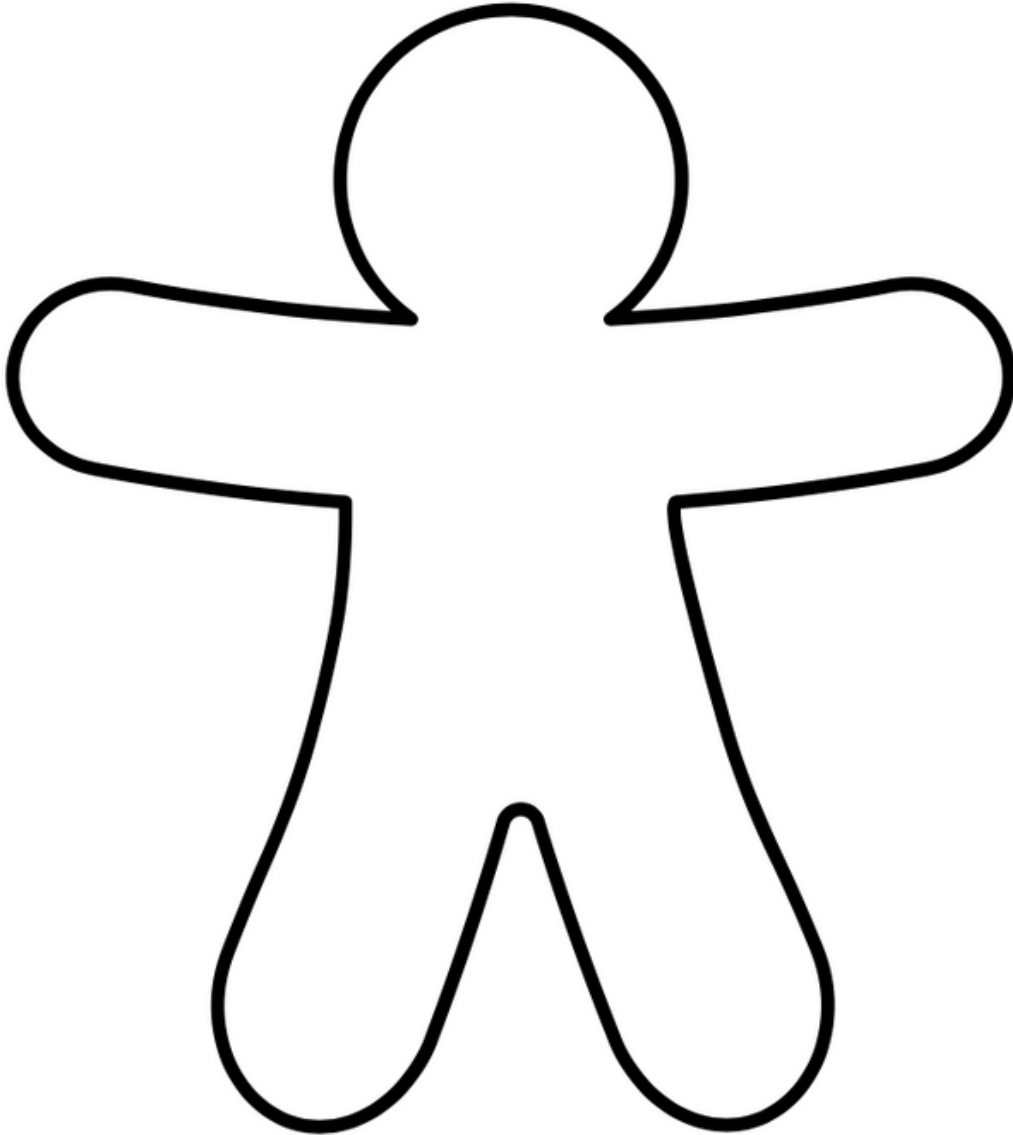
#### **2. Unravel and understand (there = either state, feeling or behaviour)**

- what gets them there?
- what keeps them there?
- what takes them out of there?

#### **3. Diffuse and Develop**

Once helpful behaviours have been identified the work becomes about creating strategies that will work for the individual to defuse difficult behaviours and develop strategies that will calm and be helpful for them.

# SENSATIONS & MY BODY



**COLOUR/ DOODLE/ SCRIBBLE TO SHOW DIFFERENT SENSATIONS INSIDE & OUTSIDE - FEEL  
FREE TO USE DIFFERENT COLOURS & TEXTURE**

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## **SENSATIONS IN MY BODY?**

<b>ELECTRIC</b>	<b>FLEXIBLE</b>
<b>INTENSE</b>	<b>SLUSHY</b>
<b>COSY</b>	<b>ICY</b>
<b>PUFFY</b>	<b>FOGGY</b>
<b>FLUFFY</b>	<b>FLOATY</b>
<b>ELASTIC</b>	<b>POINTY</b>
<b>BOUNCY</b>	<b>PRICKLY</b>
<b>SQUIDGY</b>	<b>CREAKY</b>
<b>SQISHY</b>	<b>TOXIC</b>
<b>TICKLY</b>	<b>BURNING</b>
<b>JUMBLY</b>	<b>RAW</b>
<b>STRETCHY</b>	<b>FIREY</b>
<b>TWITCH</b>	<b>KNOTTED</b>
<b>KICK</b>	<b>THROBBING</b>
<b>FUZZY</b>	<b>ITCHY</b>
<b>FLUTTERY</b>	<b>SHIMMERY</b>
<b>STICKY</b>	<b>FLOWING</b>
<b>BUZZY</b>	<b>STILL</b>
<b>SPONGY</b>	<b>BUBBLY</b>
<b>FEATHERY</b>	<b>BUZZY</b>
<b>FLIMSY</b>	<b>MELTING</b>
<b>STEELY</b>	<b>PINCHING</b>

**IF I FEEL UNSAFE .. MY BODY  
LETS ME KNOW**

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### Challenging Behaviours

The orange cards are the behaviour cards. If age appropriate let them look at the cards and explore their opinions on for example energy drinks, how it could impact them. If you have already introduced the states to them (mobilised, immobilized and safe and social) explore with curiosity call

### My most common behaviour .....

Ask the young person to pick a behaviour they find most difficult to manage in themselves. Explore what gets them there, what keeps them there and what takes them out of there?

### The Past, Present and Future

Ask the user to think about a challenging situation they have been facing and browse through the cards which resemble the past present and future about the situation and explore with gentle curiosity why they have chosen those cards.

### Challenging Behaviour

Perhaps the user is holding onto a behaviour which is not helpful to them. With gentle curiosity ask them to pick a card which resembles this challenging behaviour. Explore the reasons they may want to change this behaviour to more helpful one. It can help to explore the advantages and the disadvantages of holding onto this behaviour.

Ask them to identify on the Polyvagal Teen® track where their behaviour would sit. They can place a marker on the track or use the worksheet to colour in or doodle where they are, where they would like to be on the track and what needs to happen for this change. Remember no behaviour is bad all behaviour is telling us about what's going on for the young person with their nervous system.

So for example if the young person identifies they are in a mobilised state by being short and snappy and they realise they are angry - the work can then become about "How can they voice the anger in a more helpful way?"

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### ideas for using

#### **Memory Game:**

Shuffle the cards and lay them out face down in a grid. Players take turns flipping over two cards at a time, trying to match a pair. If a player matches a pair, they get to keep the cards and earn a point. The player with the most points at the end of the game wins.

#### **Scavenger Hunt:**

Hide the cards around the room. Players race to find all of the cards, and the first player to find e.g 10 cards wins. You could also add a twist by requiring players to find the cards in a specific order based on the states of the cards.

#### **Storytelling Game:**

Players draw a card and use it as a prompt to tell a story about a time when they felt a certain emotion or experienced a specific behaviour. For example, if a player draws the "hibernate" card, they could share a story about a time when they felt they wanted to hibernate, what got them there? How long did they stay there? Who helped them out of the state? What would they have liked to have happened?

#### **Matching Game:**

Shuffle the cards and lay them out face up. Players take turns selecting two cards at a time, trying to match the color and symbol pairs. If a player matches a pair, they get to keep the cards and earn a point. The player with the most points at the end of the game wins.

#### **Charades:**

Users draw a card and act out the emotion or behaviour depicted on the card without speaking. The other players try to guess what emotion or sensation the player is portraying. The player who guesses correctly gets to draw the next card and act out the prompt. To add a twist they could act out a book, film or song with the word of the card in it e.g anger so would act out a song. film

#### **Truth or Dare:**

Users draw a card and choose to either answer a truth question related to the emotion or behaviour depicted on the card, or to perform a dare related to the card. For example, if a player draws the "anger" card, they could choose to answer a truth question about a time when they felt angry, or to perform a dare related to managing anger, such as taking three deep breaths.