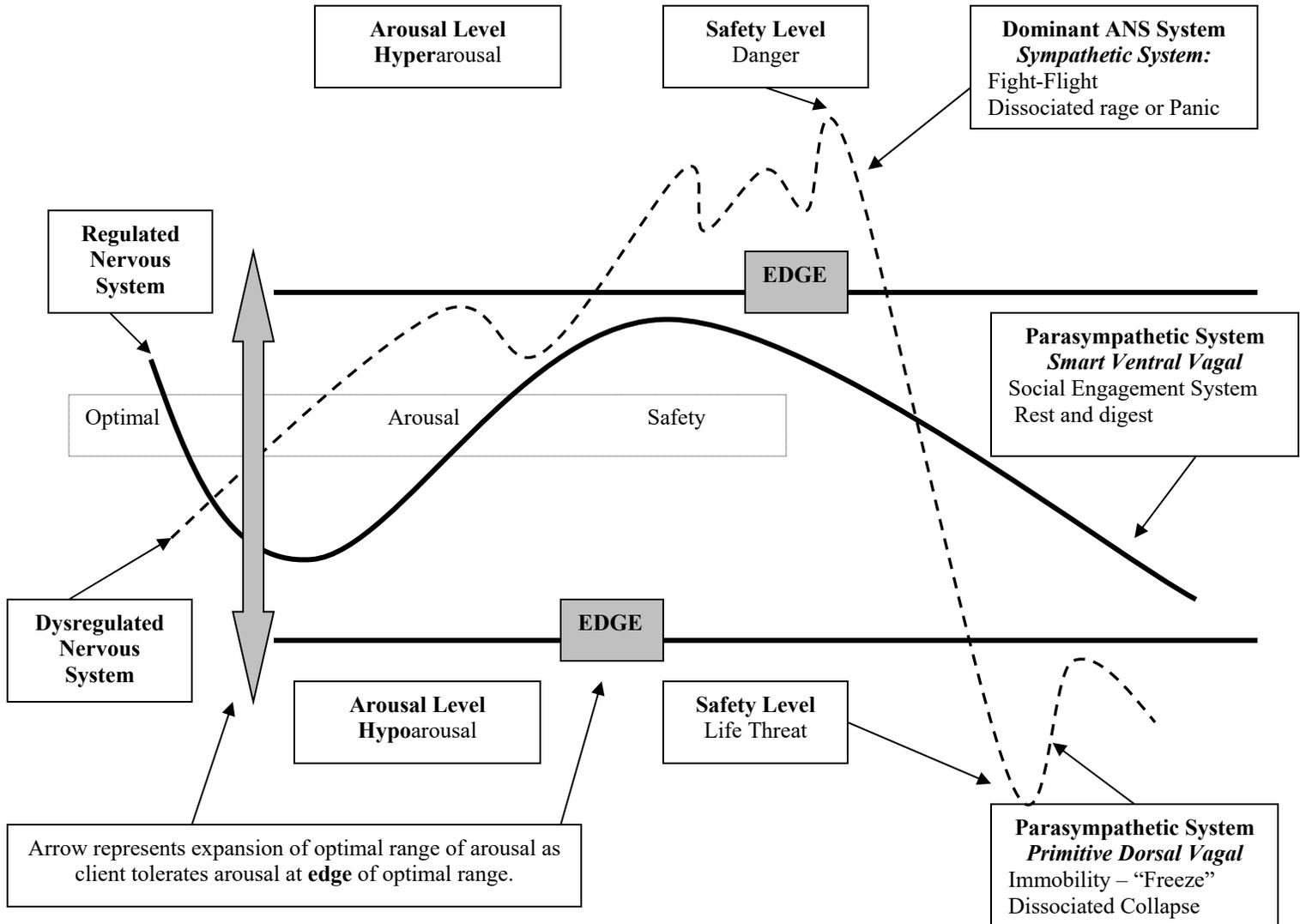


# Patterns of Regulated and Dysregulated Autonomic Arousal

## The Polyvagal Theory



The older vagal branch (*Dorsal Vagal*) shuts down behavior (Freeze mode) when a life threat is perceived thus disengaging the social engagement system. The newer vagal branch (*Ventral Vagal*) mediates affective intensity within an optimal arousal zone, which allows for the social engagement system to remain active. Affective experience at edge of the optimal arousal zone might provoke an “early scene.” Successful completion of the redecision process requires mediation of affect by the “smart” vagal system i.e. the *ventral vagal*. During the redecision process, the client’s “smart” vagas mediates affect associated with the “early scene” as the client’s middle prefrontal cortex mediates integration of the affect within a coherent narrative. The therapist assists the client’s affect regulation by maintaining contact with the client throughout the process. In other words, the client’s affect regulation at the **edge** of the optimal range of arousal range (co-regulated by the therapist) allows the client to organize information and energy associated with the early scene in a fashion consistent with an I’m OK You’re OK frame of reference. The redecision provides the client with a flexible, adaptive, coherent I’m OK You’re OK organization of experience for use in future transactions with others. The redecision and anchoring processes might allow the client to myelinate neural pathways within this I’m OK You’re OK frame of reference. This myelination may expand the client’s optimal range of arousal allowing for future exposure to early scenes to be independently mediated into coherent narratives.

Adapted from: Montgomery, A. (2013) *Neurobiology Essentials for Clinicians: What Every Therapist Needs to Know*. New York, NY: Norton. P. 90. & Fosha, D., Siegel, D.J., Solomon, M.F. (2009) *The Healing Power of Emotion: Affective Neuroscience & Clinical Practice*. New York NY: Norton. P. 121 (J. Wheatley-Crosbie, based on Porges, 1997).