



ELMHURST COUNSELING

Green Body/Behavioral Signals (green pathway = regulated, socially engaged, receptive, open to learning)
Parasympathetic Nervous System, Ventral Vagal Pathway

Words that describe people in the green pathway: Safe and secure, calm, content, happy, joyful, cooperative, playful, attentive, alert, focused, receptive, open, peaceful, engaged

In our bodies, we might see:

- Focused attention
- Relaxed posture without clenching or gripping
- Regular and rhythmic breathing and heart rate
- A variety of tones of voice (not monotone)
- Appropriate and balanced body reactions (with movements neither too fast nor too slow) Smiles, neutral or relaxed facial muscles
- Alert, bright, or shiny eyes
- Giggles or other joyful expressions

Red Body/Behavioral Signals (red pathway = dysregulated, highly activated, urge for movement, protective, instinctive)
Sympathetic Nervous System Pathway

Words that describe people in the red pathway: Angry, aggressive, hostile, disruptive, noncompliant, defiant, misbehaving, having a tantrum, hyperactive, hostile, argumentative, pressured

In our physical bodies, we might see:

- Intense, narrow focus or continual roving with scattered attention
- Running away, constant motion, or an increased need to move or escape
- Fast, erratic, or impulsive movements
- Hitting, attacking, kicking, spitting, jumping, or throwing objects
- Shallow, fast, or irregular breathing patterns Increased heart rate
- High-pitched, loud, hostile, gruff, or piercing tone of voice; out-of-control laughter
- Eyes tightly closed or wide open
- Tense, clenched facial muscles or jaw
- A range of facial expressions or a forced smile
- Ability to hear the human voice is compromised (inner ear shifts to hear low frequency predatory sounds)

Blue Body/Behavioral Signals (blue pathway = immobilized, disconnected, withdrawn)
Parasympathetic Nervous System, Dorsal Vagal Pathway

Words that describe people in the blue pathway: Sad, slow, blank, distant, disengaged, flat, frozen, absent, disinterested, disappearing, hopeless

In our physical bodies, we might see:

- Slow or few movements, slouching, wandering aimlessly
- Apparent drowsiness or the appearance of being checked out
- Little or no exploration, play, or curiosity
- Slowed heart rate and breathing
- Moving slowly or even appearing to be immobilized
- Speaking in a flat voice with little intonation and/or cold, soft, or sad sounds
- Eyes that are glazed, turned downward, or not seeking contact with others
- An expressionless face, with no smile