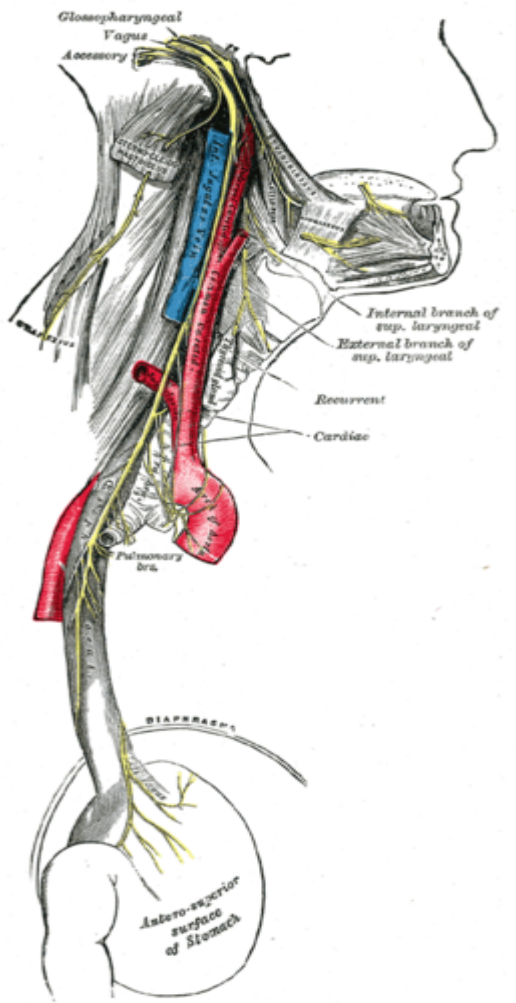


## THE VAGAL NERVE: THE THREE STATES OF BEING (Stephen Porges Polyvagal Theory)



SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT & SELF-CONNECTION	FIGHT OR FLIGHT	FREEZE
Green light	Yellow light	Red light
Face is responsive	Face is partially frozen , angry, or scared	Face is frozen
Heart rate is responsive	Heart rate is high	Heart rate is slow
Blood pressure is responsive	Blood pressure is high	Blood pressure is extremely low
Body is flexible	Body is tense	Body is collapsed
Curiosity, interest, passion, calm	Fear, anger	Hopelessness, shame, confusion
We feel safe and comfortable	We are on alert for danger	We don't feel anything, or we feel numb
Hippocampus and prefrontal cortex are working	Amygdala territory	Shut-down

### Two Paths out of Social Engagement/Self-Connection and into Fight/Flight or Freeze

1. The presence of overwhelming emotion: we lose connection to the left hemisphere and move into the unregulated right.
2. The presence of UNREMARKED emotion: we unconsciously express emotion we don't know about or have not yet processed.

### The Role of Empathy in Creating New Neural Pathways and Widening our Windows of Tolerance

- Non-verbal empathy, resonating without words, models the brain path for a return to calm.
- When we include words to name experience, we also activate the prefrontal cortex and begin to calm the amygdala.
- When we calm the amygdala, we free the brain's energy for mindsight and creativity.
- We are modeling the holding of the self with compassion, helping the person receiving the empathy grow new neural connections between the prefrontal cortex and the amygdala.