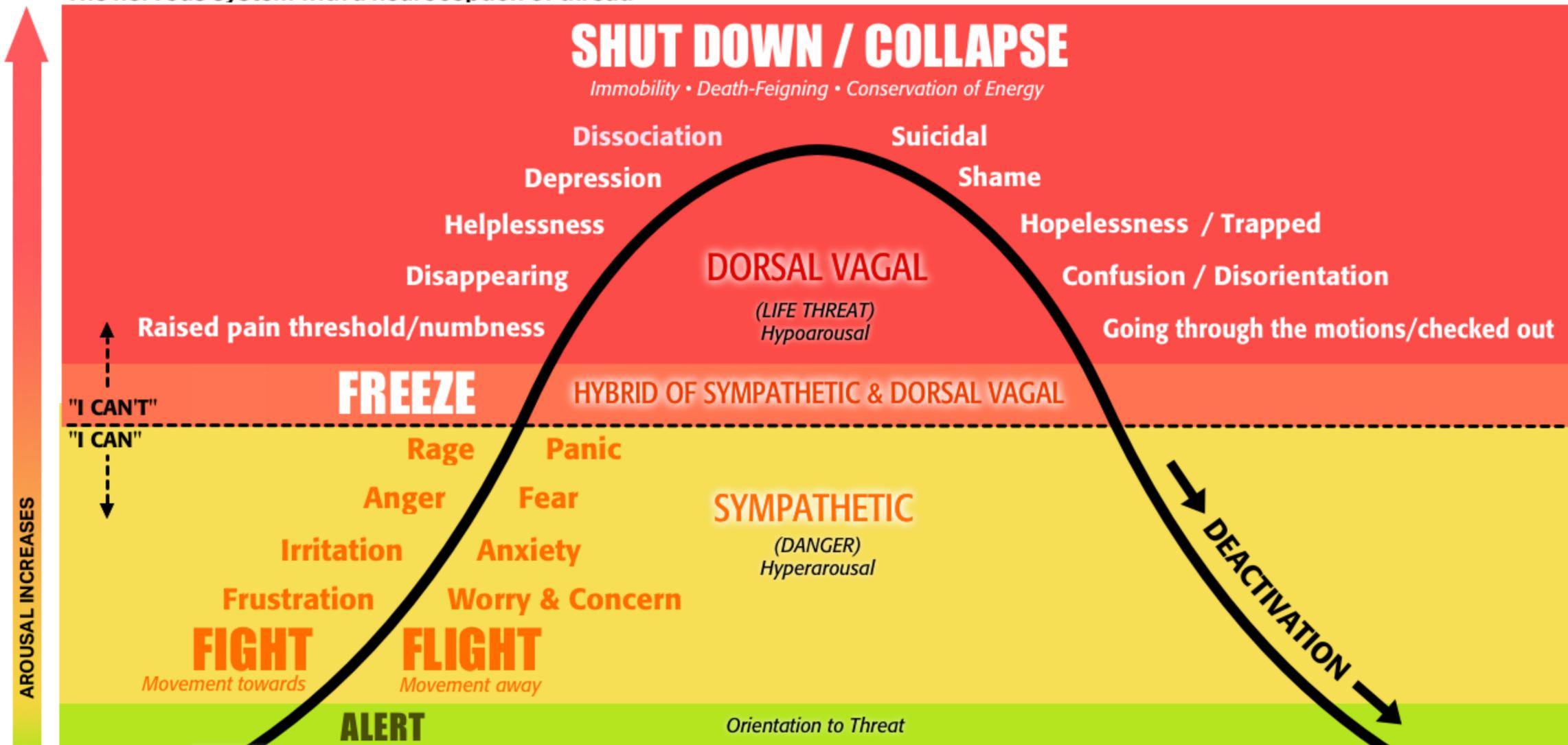


# POLYVAGAL THEORY CHART OF TRAUMA RESPONSE

The nervous system with a neuroception of threat:



**PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM**  
 DORSAL VAGAL COMPLEX

**Increases**

- Fuel storage & insulin activity • Immobilization behavior (with fear)
- Endorphins that help numb and raise the pain threshold
- Conservation of metabolic resources

**Decreases**

- Heart Rate • Blood Pressure • Temperature • Muscle Tone
- Facial Expressions & Eye Contact • Depth of Breath • Social Behavior
- Attunement to Human Voice • Sexual Responses
- Immune Response

**SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM**

**Increases**

- Blood Pressure • Heart Rate • Fuel Availability • Adrenaline
- Oxygen Circulation to Vital Organs • Blood Clotting • Pupil Size
- Dilation of Bronchi • Defensive Responses

**Decreases**

- Fuel Storage • Insulin Activity • Digestion • Salivation
- Relational Ability • Immune Response

The nervous system with a neuroception of safety:



**PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM**  
 VENTRAL VAGAL COMPLEX

**Increases**

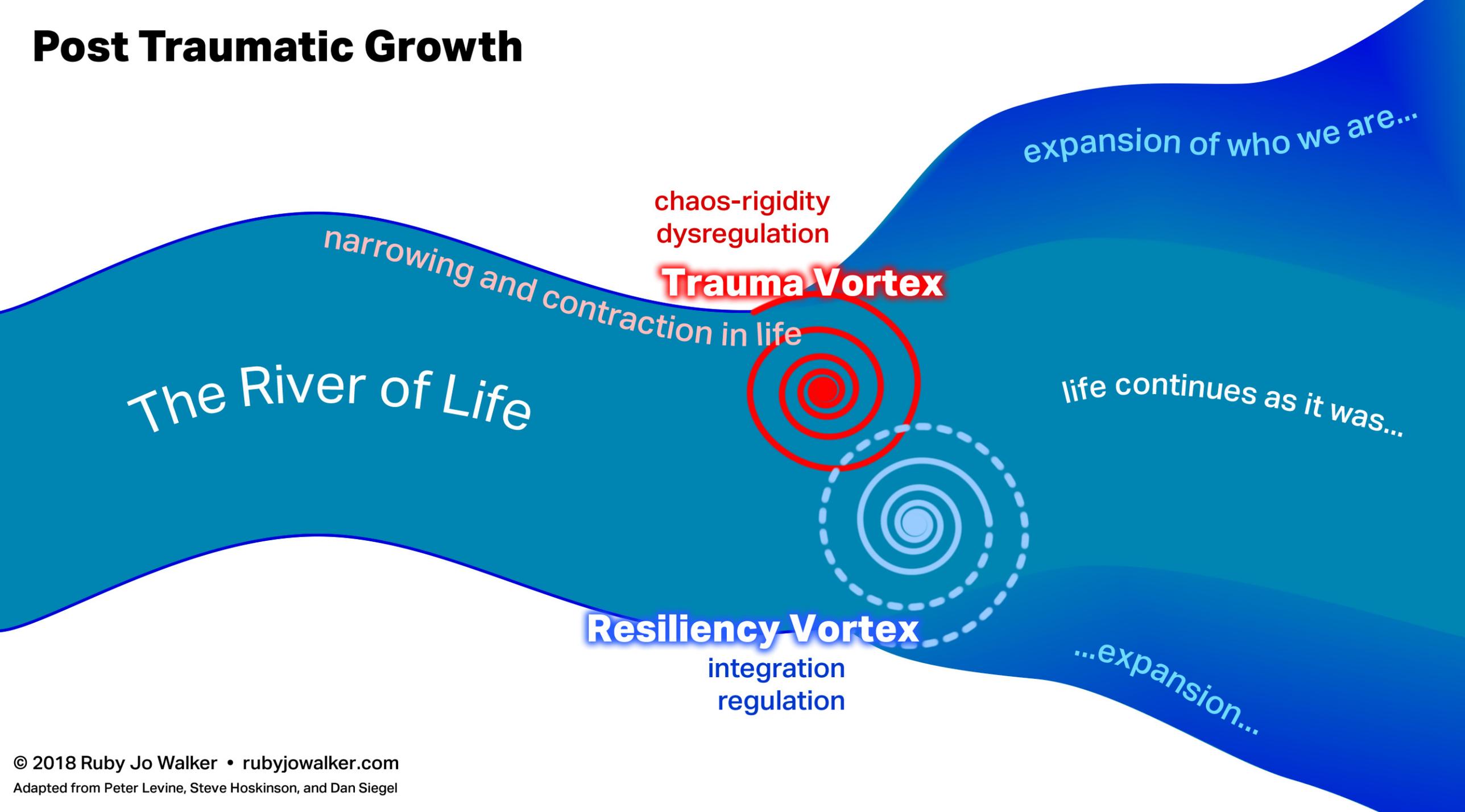
- Digestion • Intestinal Motility • Resistance to Infection
- Immune Response • Rest and Recuperation • Health & Vitality
- Circulation to non-vital organs (skin, extremities),
- Oxytocin (neuromodulator involved in social bonds that allows immobility without fear) • Ability to Relate and Connect
- Movement in eyes and head turning • Prosody in voice • Breath

**Decreases**

- Defensive Responses

VVC is the beginning and end of stress response.  
 When VVC is dominant, SNS and DVC are in transient blends which promote healthy physiological functioning.

# Post Traumatic Growth





## Resilience in Difficult Times

During challenges, like the pandemic and even the political unrest that is occurring now or even other life events, it is important to work on our own resiliency. Resiliency is our ability to recover quickly from difficulties. The good news is that our resiliency can be developed all through our lives. And since 2/3 of our qualities are learned and not inherited, we can create more resiliency by working with nervous system-informed practices that support regulation. Regulation is about being able to change our state from a trauma or dysregulated state to a state in which we can stay mindful and aware—and have choices in our actions and behaviors. The practices below are ways to support this option in our nervous system.

### Some of these practices include:

**Orientation:** Allowing ourselves to make contact with the environment through our senses: looking around and taking in what is pleasant, feeling the warmth of a cup filled with warm tea, listening to the sounds around us, etc.

**Breath work:** An easy breath practice that takes only 11 seconds is the 3-3-5 breath, which is inhale for 3, hold for 3 and exhale for 5. This can be done without anyone even knowing you are utilizing this breath practice.

**“Taking in the good”\*:** Letting ourselves notice what is right and okay in the moment. We might not be able to leave the house, but we might be able to take in the comfort of a friend reaching out, or a tasty meal. Savoring helps us—it actually shifts the nervous system. (*\*“Taking in the good” is a Dr. Rick Hanson term.*)

**Self-compassion:** Holding our inherent goodness and offering ourselves the kindness we often give others while feeling our shared suffering. It helps to keep attention on the heart area while doing this practice.

**Gratitude:** Being grateful for what we do have, even if there are losses and other painful events occurring. Some of these practices have available audios on the resources page at [Rubyjowalker.com](http://Rubyjowalker.com).