The Art & Science of Transformational Change

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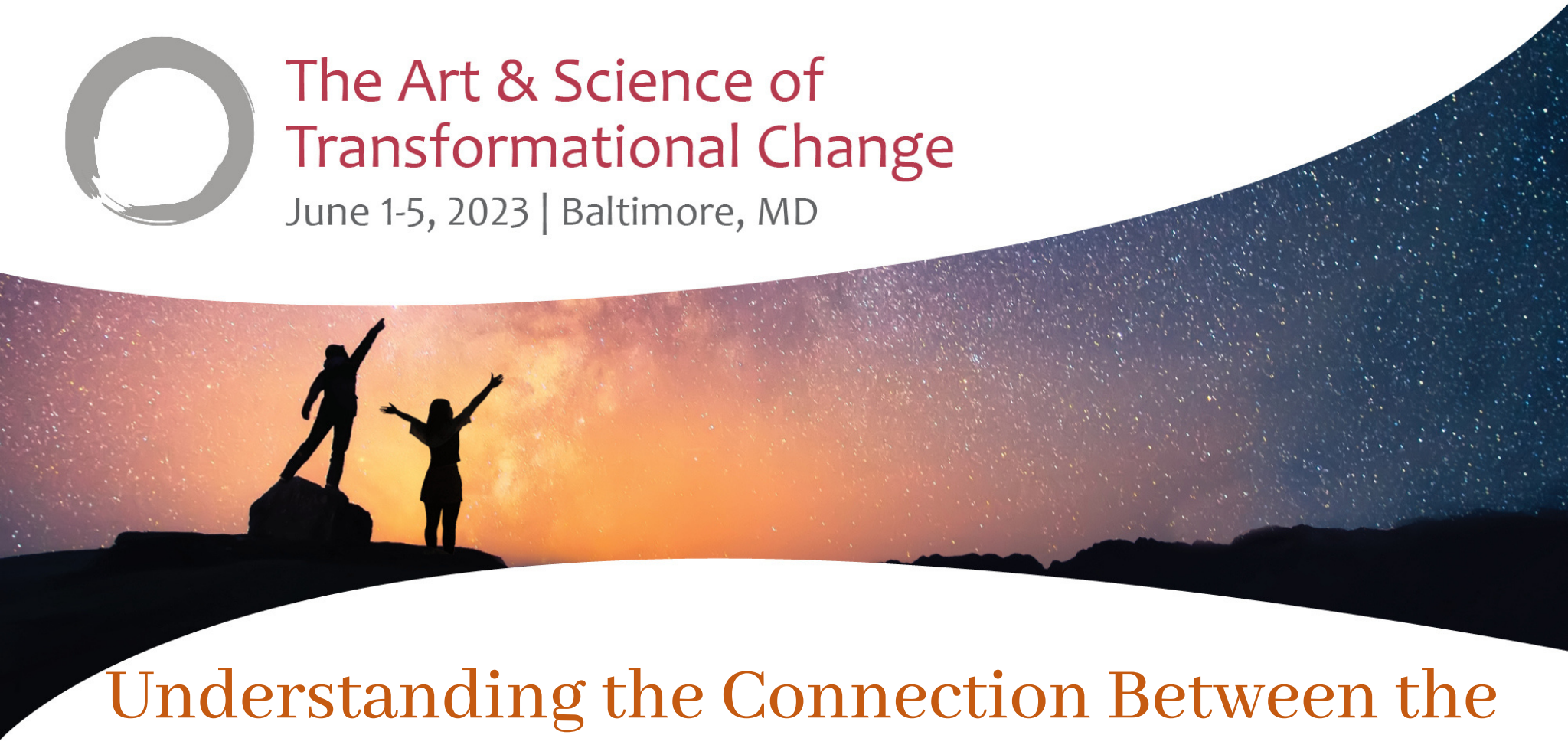

Understanding the Connection Between the Vagus Nerve and Chakras in Trauma and Attachment Processing

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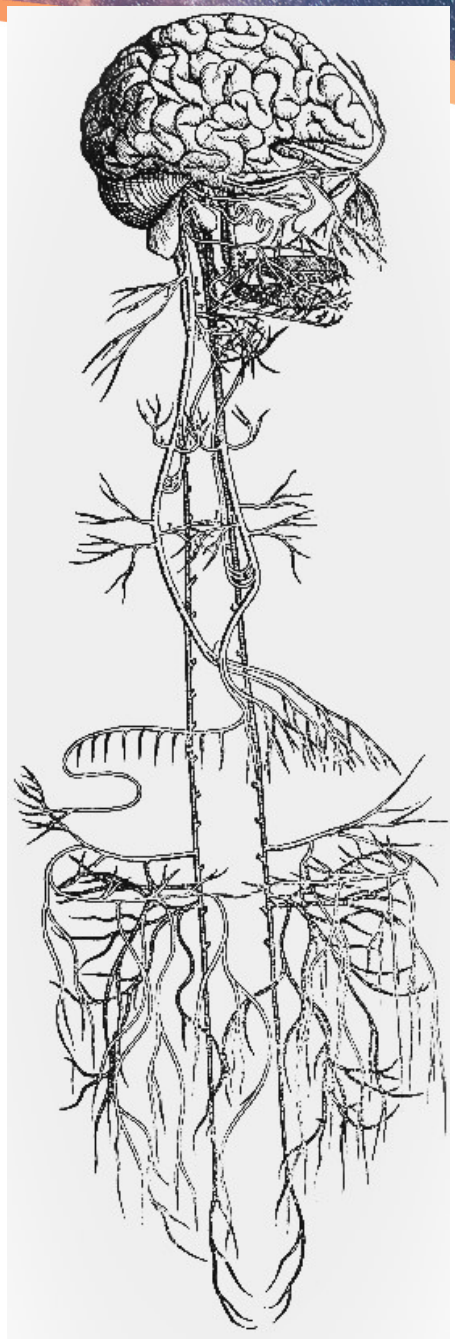
25TH INTERNATIONAL
ENERGY PSYCHOLOGY CONFERENCE

What is Vagus Nerve?

- 10th cranial nerve – one of 12 leading from the brain stem (medulla oblongata) (Porges, 1991)
- Bilateral
- Part of the autonomic nervous system
- Vagus – Longest nerve (diaphragmatic and subdiaphragmatic)
- Controls significant organs
- Conducts constant heart rate
- 90% of brain's output to vagus nerve
- Neuroception

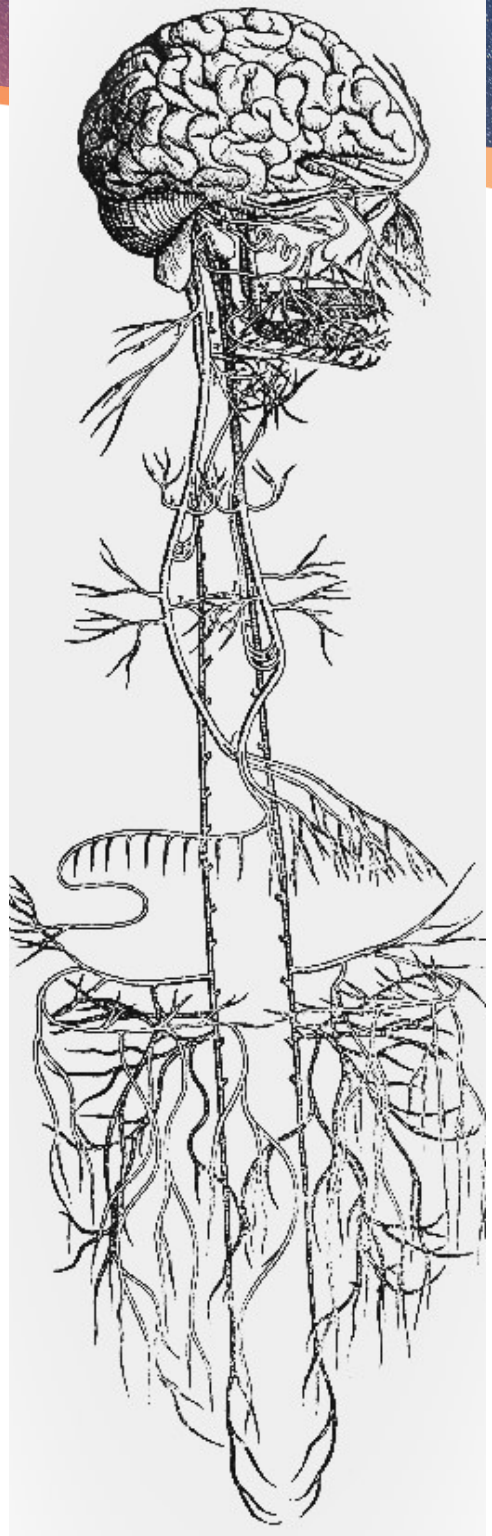


Porges, S.W. (1991). Vagal tone: An autonomic mediator of affect. In J.A. Garber & K. A. Dodge (eds), The development of affect regulation and dysregulation (pp. 111-128) . New York: Cambridge University Press.

What does the Vagus Nerve do?

Three Branches / States

- Ventral – Social Engagement
  Feeling safe, moderates heart rate, vocal tone and facial expressions
- Sympathetic – Mobilization
  Heart rate increases, HPA cortisol, fight or flight
- Dorsal - Immobilization
  "Possum", blood pressure & heart rate drop, dissociation, conserves energy in system



Dana, D., (2018). *The polyvagal theory in therapy*. New York. Norton.

Ventral

Safety/Engages

- Instills calm
- Manages heart rate
- Defines tonal quality in voice
- Allows for deeper listening
- Supradiaphragmatic & Myelinated (Porges, 2011)

Porges, S. W. (2011). *The polyvagal theory: Neurophysiological foundations of emotions, attachment, communication, and self-regulation*. New York: Norton. (pp 167-185).

Sympathetic

Fight or Flight/ Mobilizes

- Fight or Flight Response
- Scans for Danger (Ogden, et al 2006)
- Changes scope of listening
- Engages hormones to act
- Subdiaphragmatic & Unmyelinated

Ogden, P., Minton, K., Pain, C., (2006). *Trauma and the Body: A sensorimotor approach to psychotherapy*. New York. Norton. (p 59).

Dorsal

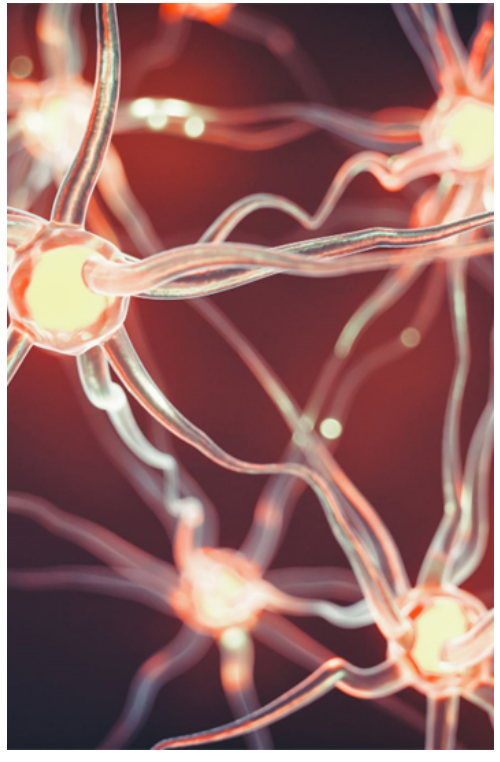
Dissociation/Immobilizes

- Shuts down system when overwhelmed (Porges, 2011)
- Conserves energy (perceived lack of oxygen)
- Controls digestive process
- Upregulates and downregulates digestion
- Subdiaphragmatic & Unmyelinated

Porges, S. W. (2011). *The polyvagal theory: Neurophysiological foundations of emotions, attachment, communication, and self-regulation*. New York: Norton., p. 159.

Regulating

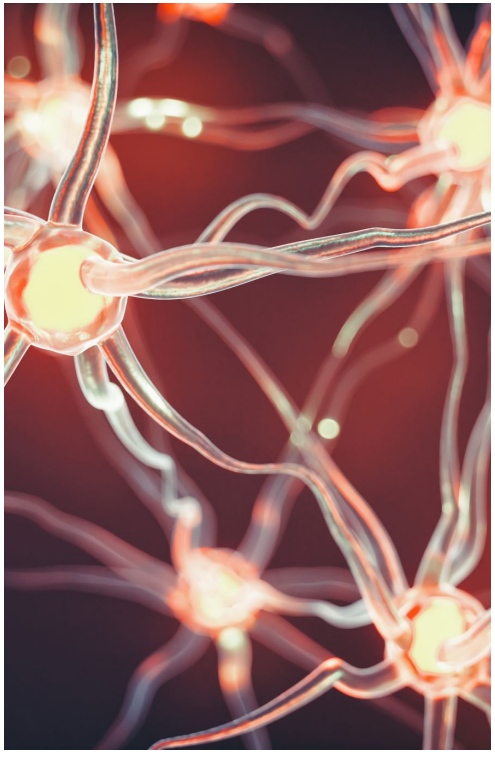
- Gets into tolerable range of affect (Ogden & Fischer 2015)
- Lowers blood pressure, heart rate, increases oxygen to brain
- Baroceptors
- Relies on individual's own system and skillsets
- Negative patterns of self-soothing – addictions
- Creates negative feedback loop if information opposes the system (Porges & Dana, 2018)



Ogden, P., & Fischer, J., (2015). *Sensorimotor psychotherapy: Interventions for trauma and attachment.* New York, NY: Norton.
Porges, S., & Dana, D., (2018) *Clinical applications of the polyvagal theory: The emergence of polyvagal-informed therapies*. New York: Norton.. (p 86).

Coregulating

- Engages ventral vagal tone
- Creates positive feedback loop when another safe system in play
- Connects and calm
  Establishes safety (Schwartz & Mailberger, 2018)
- Understands how client affects you
- Knows what state you are in
- Knows what state client is in



- Shifts states (Courtois & Ford, 2009)

Schwartz., A., Mailberger, B., (2018). *EMDR therapy and somatic psychology: Intervention for enhanced embodiment in trauma treatment.* New York. Norton.
Courtois, C. A., Ford, J. D., (2009). *Treating complex traumatic stress disorders: An evidence-based guide*. New York, Guilford. P. 73

Chakras

- Energy centers that are experienced and sometimes seen
- Demonstrates vital force of cosmos are no different than body and mind (Breaux, 1990)
- Convey or receive energy/information (Brennan, 1987)
- Reflect the experience of the person depending upon how chakric energy is moving in body
- Possess psychological dimensions that align with messaging of vagus nerve
- Align with and extension of the nervous system (Sweta, et al., 2018)

Breaux, C., (1990). Journey into consciousness: The chakras, tantra & Jungian psychology. London. Rider. (p. iix).

Brennan, B.A., (1987). *Hands of light: A guide to healing through the human energy field*. New York. Bantam. pp172-175.

Sweta, K.M., Awasthi, H.H., Godbole, A., Prajapati, S. (2018). Physio-anatomical resemblance of inferior hypogastric plexus with muladhara chakra: A cadaveric study. AYU, 38(1-2).

Each chakra influences the organs, muscles, ligaments, veins, and all other body parts within its energy field. Chakras also influence the endocrine system and are so strongly involved with moods, personality, and overall health. Your physical and psychological evolution, as well as your spiritual journey, are all reflected in your chakras ~ Donna Eden

Eden, D., Feinstein, D., (1998). *Energy medicine: Balancing your body's energy for optimal health, joy and vitality*. New York. Penguin group. p 153.

Mapping Neuroception through the Chakras

Further, we have found supportive evidence of the traditional notion that psi abilities can be classified into two types: the powers of reception and the powers of generation. The powers of reception seem to be linked to the lower chakras, the powers of generation to the higher ~
Hiroshi Motoyama

Motoyama, H. (2001). *Theories of the chakras: Bridge to higher consciousness*. Delhi. New Age Books. P.268

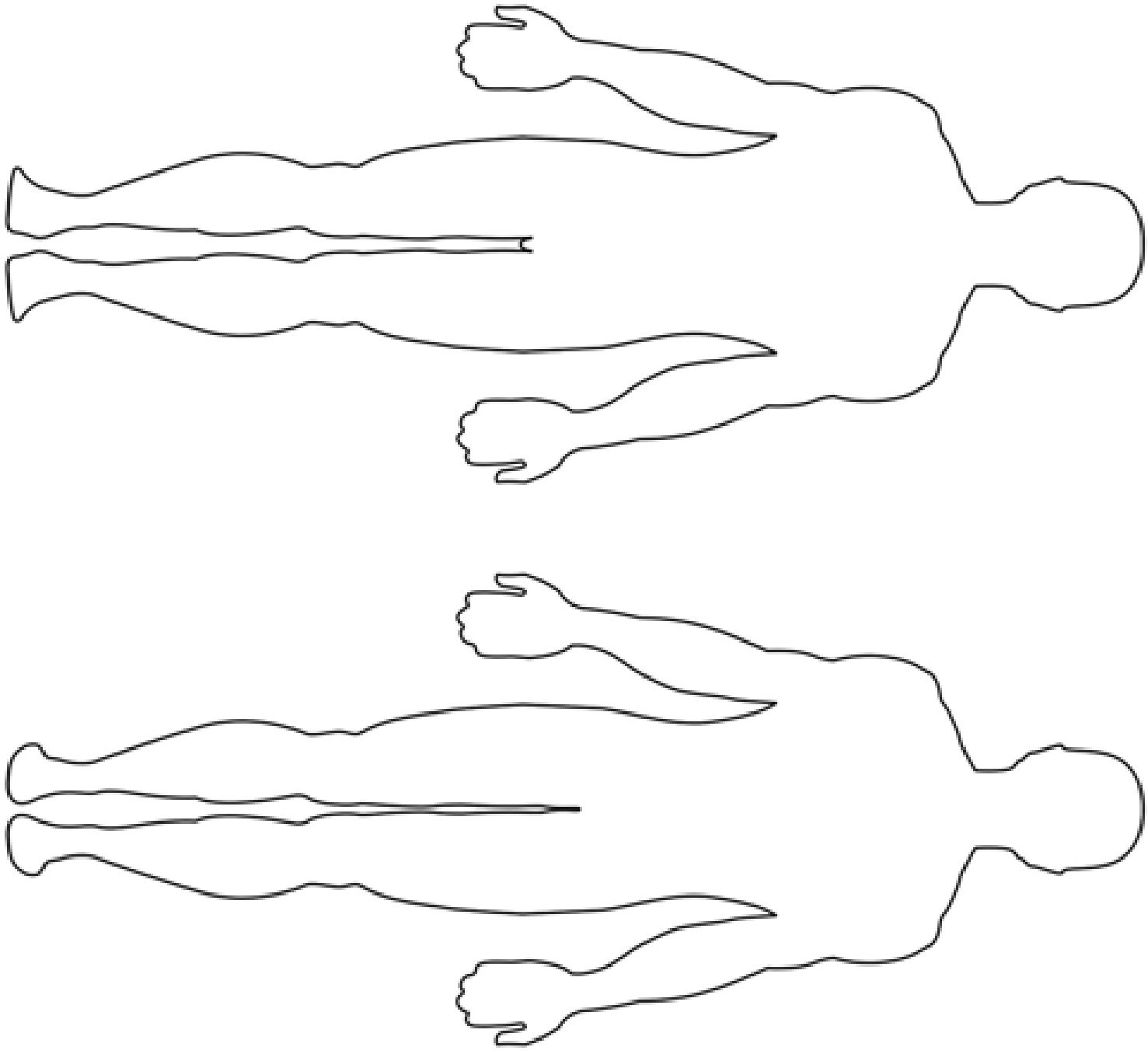
Mapping Neuroception through the Chakras

- Essential Chakras - Root/Sacral/Solar Plexus

  Strong connection to early childhood attachment and trauma

- Evolving Chakras – Heart/Throat/Third Eye/Crown

While trauma and attachment messages felt in these chakras, evolving is where shifts can occur for rest of system

Summary

- The three main branches of the vagus nerve are ventral, sympathetic and dorsal vagal
- These branches align and express through the chakras
- Unless the body/mind feel safe, it is hard to utilize chakra energy.
- Knowing the dimensions of the chakras can help you understand the somatic messaging of your client's attachment styles and traumatic experiences
- Chakras with the alignment of the vagus nerve is to be experienced not analyzed as each person's meaning is unique
- Staying present to your own chakric/somatic experiencing helps you stay present to and track your client's through processing