SŌMA

A PRINTABLE TOOL

Map your *nervous system*

Start with the state you know best. Fill in how it shows up for you, then give it a name of your own. A word you chose yourself is easier to catch in the moment.

1 Steady and connected

VENTRAL VAGAL · TOP OF THE LADDER

Breathing is easy, I can focus and listen.

In my body _____

My thoughts sound like _____

What I tend to do _____

My own name for it _____

2 Mobilized: fight or flight

SYMPATHETIC · MIDDLE

Heart up, muscles ready, attention narrow.

In my body _____

My thoughts sound like _____

What I tend to do _____

My own name for it _____

3 Shut down: freeze and collapse

DORSAL VAGAL · BOTTOM

Low energy, foggy, far away.

In my body _____

My thoughts sound like _____

What I tend to do _____

My own name for it _____

SŌMA

WHAT MOVES ME

Up and down the ladder

Over a week, notice what pushes you out of the steady state and what helps you come back. Small things count most.

What pulls me down

Moments, places, people or habits that tip me into fight or flight or shutdown.

What brings me back

"Glimmers": a voice, a view, a smell, a song. Small moments of steadiness.

One small action for each state

Something that takes under two minutes and that you'd still do on a bad day.

When I'm steady, I keep it by _____

When I'm in fight or flight, I _____

When I'm shut down, I _____

A map, not a diagnosis. This ladder comes from polyvagal theory and is used by many therapists as a practical way to notice your state. If symptoms last for weeks, get in the way of work, sleep or relationships, or started after a traumatic event, talk to a doctor or therapist. If you're having thoughts of harming yourself, contact local emergency services or a crisis line now.