What is FND?
A Nervous System Perspective
FND – A Condition of the Nervous System

FND is NOT a mental health disorder.

FND is REAL, you are NOT “faking it,” “making it up,” or “doing it for attention”.

FND is hard to understand for others and can be lonely and scary.

FND is NOT who you are, you do not have to live with symptoms. FND is temporary.
FND impacts your

**Body:** seizures, paralysis, out-of-body, twitches, weakness, pain, etc.

**Mind:** Racing thoughts, rumination, worry, memory problems, difficulty focusing, brain fog, etc.

**Emotions:** Anxiety, depression, fear, anger, shame, hopelessness etc.
Your Nervous System …

Consists of Your Brain and the Nerves in our Body

Controls Movement  
FND = involuntary movement

Effects all our Senses: see, hear, taste, touch, feel  
(Sensitivities)

Impacts thoughts, feelings, learning, memory
Your Nervous System sends information from the body to the brain – In FND the messaging is disorganized.
The part of the Nervous System important for FND is the Autonomic Nervous System

Three Pathways

- Sympathetic
  - Mobilization

- Parasympathetic
  - Nervous System
    - Ventral Vagal
      - Safety and Connection
    - Dorsal Vagal
      - Immobilization
Think of Your Nervous System as a Ladder

Increase in Nervous System Activation

Time

Dorsal Vagal
- Immobilization
  - Your body shuts down.
- Collapsed

Sympathetic
- Action taking
  - You feel like you want to run or fight.
- Alarmed and Hypervigilant

Ventral Vagal
- Rest and Relax. Grounded.
  - You feel safe. You are OK.
- Aware and Alert

Adapted from Schlote, Porges, & Dana

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We All Get Activated at Times

Increase in Nervous System Activation

- **Dorsal Vagal**
  - Immobilization
  - The body shuts down.

- **Sympathetic**
  - Action taking
  - The body in fight or flight.

- **Ventral Vagal**
  - The body is in a regulated state of safety.

Aware and Alert

Alarmed and Hypervigilant

Collapsed
Where your FND Symptoms Happen

- **Dorsal Vagal**
  - Pain
  - Racing thoughts and worry
  - Disconnection and dissociation
  - Overwhelm
  - Anxiety
  - Shame

- **Sympathetic**
  - Seizures
  - Tremors and spasms
  - Numbness
  - Drop attacks
  - Blurry vision
  - Tunnel vision

- **Ventral Vagal**
  - No or very few FND symptoms
  - Creative and curious
  - Happy and confident
  - You feel safe inside and outside your body
  - Life feels good with little hiccups

Adapted from Schlote, Porges, Dana, Ogden
What Experiences can be part of FND?

- Sensory Processing Difficulty
- Brain Fog, Difficulty Focusing
- Memory Loss
- Dissociation from body & environment
- Chronic Pain Syndrome, Fibromyalgia
- Bein on the autism spectrum
- IBS, Bladder Incontinence
- Speech disturbances, stutter, etc.
- Emotional Dysregulation: Anxiety, Worry etc.
- PTSD
- Brain Fog, Difficulty Focusing, Memory Loss
- Sleep Problems
- IBS, Bladder Incontinence
Sensory Symptoms in FND

Positive Sensory Symptoms in FND (Sympathetic Activation):
- Lights too bright, blurry or double vision
- Noises too intrusive
- Heat and cold very uncomfortable
- Uncomfortable skin sensations (tingling, buzzing, crawling, prickling, tenderness or pain)
- Involuntary movement

Negative Sensory Symptoms in FND (Dorsal Vagal Collapse):
- Loss of sensation: numbness, no pain, paralysis, etc.
We all Dissociate – You Might get Stuck

Dissociation happens on a Continuum

Temporary Avoidance  Opening The Door  Stepping into  No Return

“Everyday dissociation”
Healthy adaptive form: can be integrated (movies, play, wishful thinking, fantasy world, spacing out while driving etc.).

One foot in, one foot out
Daydreaming, spacing out, distracting oneself, being “somewhere else,” disconnecting, detaching, zoning out, numbing, a “veil” between myself and the world.

Both feet out
Splitting off, quicksand, memory problems, tunnel vision, blurry vision.

No ground to return
to yourself and environment, out of body, black hole, fainting, depersonalization, seizures.

Helpful Tip: Don't open the door until you know you can step back in.
What can you do? Creating Safety & Connection

- Allowing the body to feel safe. “What feels good?”

- Stepping into the world of sensory-motor Experiences, away from the narrative.

- Catching symptoms early allows you to regulate your nervous system.

- Offering choice in the exploration of different nervous system states.

- Creating Resources: What does the nervous system need in both parent and child?
Resources to Regulate the Nervous System

- **Internal Resources** are always accessible no matter where you are.

  Examples: Kindness, compassion, patience, life-affirming thinking, positive memories, feeling lovable, hope, etc.

- **External Resources** can become internal resources.

  Examples: A safe home, your pet, weighted blanket, friends and family, ice pack, fidget toys, sunglasses, ear plugs, music, quiet, etc.
Choosing Resources Depending on Where you are on the Ladder

**Sympathetic – when the world is too much**

**Introduce Safety and Calm**

- **Internal**: a general belief that others can be supportive, the world can be safe, ability to lean into others. Etc.

- **External**: friends, family, pets, weighted blanket/vest, soft lighting, soft texture, bath, quiet, ear plugs, sunglasses, a safe home, etc.

**Dorsal Vagal – when I am numb and collapsed**

**Introduce Alertness not Activation**

- **Internal**: Kindness, compassion, patience, life-affirming thinking (“I matter.”), positive memories, feeling lovable, hope, etc.

- **External**: small movements, sensory brush, finger worm, music, touch, aromatherapy, your pet, friends and family, ice pack, fidget toys, etc.
Self-regulation – You are inherently healthy

Tracking and Naming a positive experience—where am I on the activation curve?

Bring in a Resource to regulate and Ask for Help.

Setting External and Internal Boundaries.

You are NOT your FND. There is nothing “wrong” with you.

Kindness and Self-Compassion. You are loveable just the way you are.
Co-Regulation – the Family Nervous System

Listen. Validate your child's experience. Listen again.

Learn how to regulate YOUR nervous system and help coregulate your child.

Take the shame out of the experience. FND is nobody’s fault.

Allow for space and boundaries while staying in connection.

Be curious. Don't make assumptions. “We are in this together.”
Goal: Creating a Life According to YOUR Nervous System

1. You are more than your Symptoms.
2. Know your Limits. Know your Strength.
3. Looking for "Triggers" is not helpful.
4. Not every symptom is FND. Some days we just feel off.
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