

Polyvagal Therapy and Therapeutic Techniques in Accordance with Theories on Affordances

Shawn McCabe and John C. Neill

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Long Island University - Post

| Polyvagal Theory | | | |
|------------------------|--|--|---|
| | Neuroception | | |
| | ↓ | ↓ | ↓ |
| Polyvagal Stage | Freeze Response | Fight-or-Flight Response | Socially Receptive Response |
| Physiological Response | Passive avoidance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motor Inhibition • Eye Closure • Shrinking/Hiding • Vasovagal Syncope (fainting) | Hyper vigilance Agitation Active Avoidance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escape Behavior • Self-Injurious Behavior | Facial Expression Vocalization Active Listening Social Interaction |
| Affordances | Affords escape behavior and ignoring of the situation or task | Affords escape behavior and aggression | Affords socially receptive behavior, compliance |
| Results | The subject begins to learn that the best way to handle an undesirable situation is to ignore it until it goes away. | The subject learns that they can easily run away from any situation, and begins to build resentment toward the instructor. | The subject begins to pair and build a rapport with the instructor, and positive progress can begin to be made on modifying their behavior systems. |



Theoretical Applications

- If it is only through transition into the socially receptive stage that we engage in interactive and cooperative behaviors, then it is essential that we first help clients with Autism transition before beginning any ABA procedures.
- We have seen time and time again that most people show preference between instructors, particularly those that are kind and patient with them as we now come to understand that those instructors afford positive social behaviors in them.
- If this is true, then the key to ABA is in training instructors to be properly therapeutic with any clients that they work with using Polyvagal Therapy techniques in order to ensure the affordance of social behaviors and the maximization of potential for growth.

| Establishing Operation (Body State) | Stimulus Cue (S+) | Response | Reinforcement |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Therapeutic Instructor | S+ | Compliant Behavior | Reinforcement of Compliance |
| Antagonistic Instructor | S+ | Escape Behaviors | Reinforcement of Escape |