



When Threat Steals Our Agency

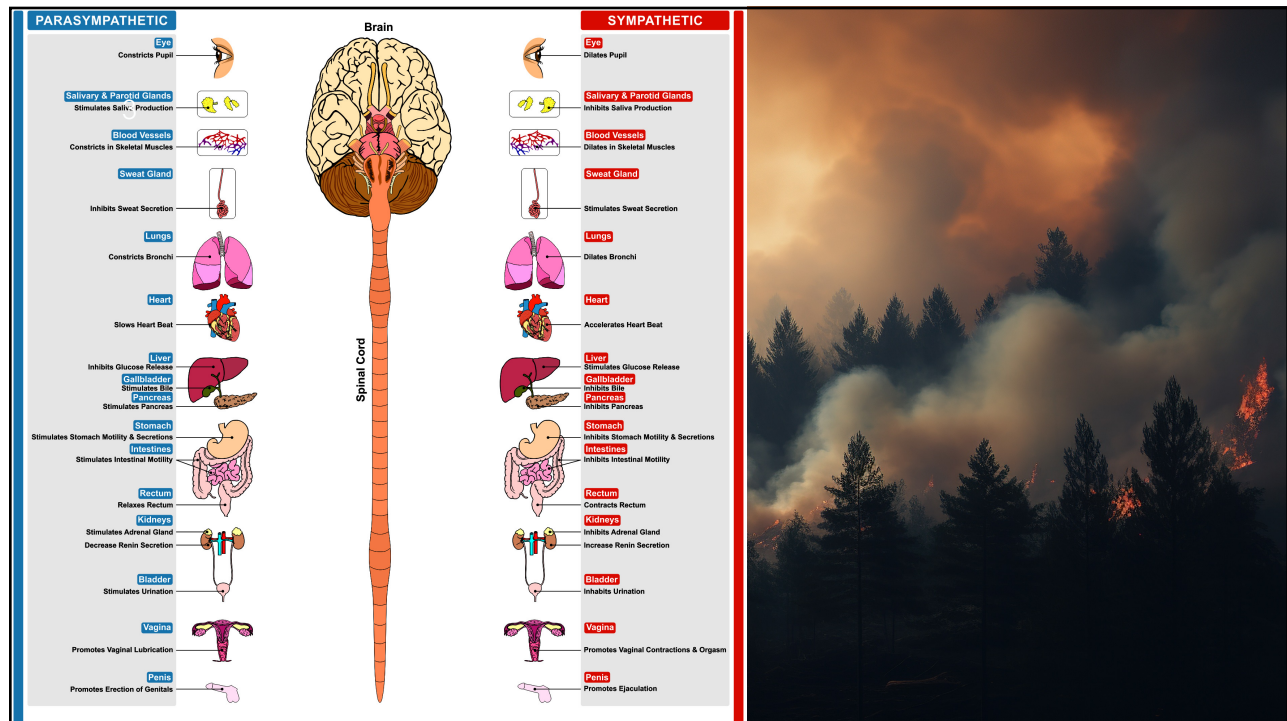
Polyvagal Theory, Social Buffering, and the Power of Connection

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Project Echo
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4 Polyvagal Theory

PRINCIPLE 1 – Neuroception




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Polyvagal Theory

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Neuroception of safety and threat



Autonomic state

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Hierarchy of States

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Social engagement
Ventral vagus



Fight or flight
Sympathetic



Shutdown
Dorsal vagus



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When Threat Steals Our Agency

- Cognition-response in fight-flight
 - Fast, threat-focused, action-oriented
- Cognition-response in shutdown-collapse
 - Slowed, disconnected, or inaccessible

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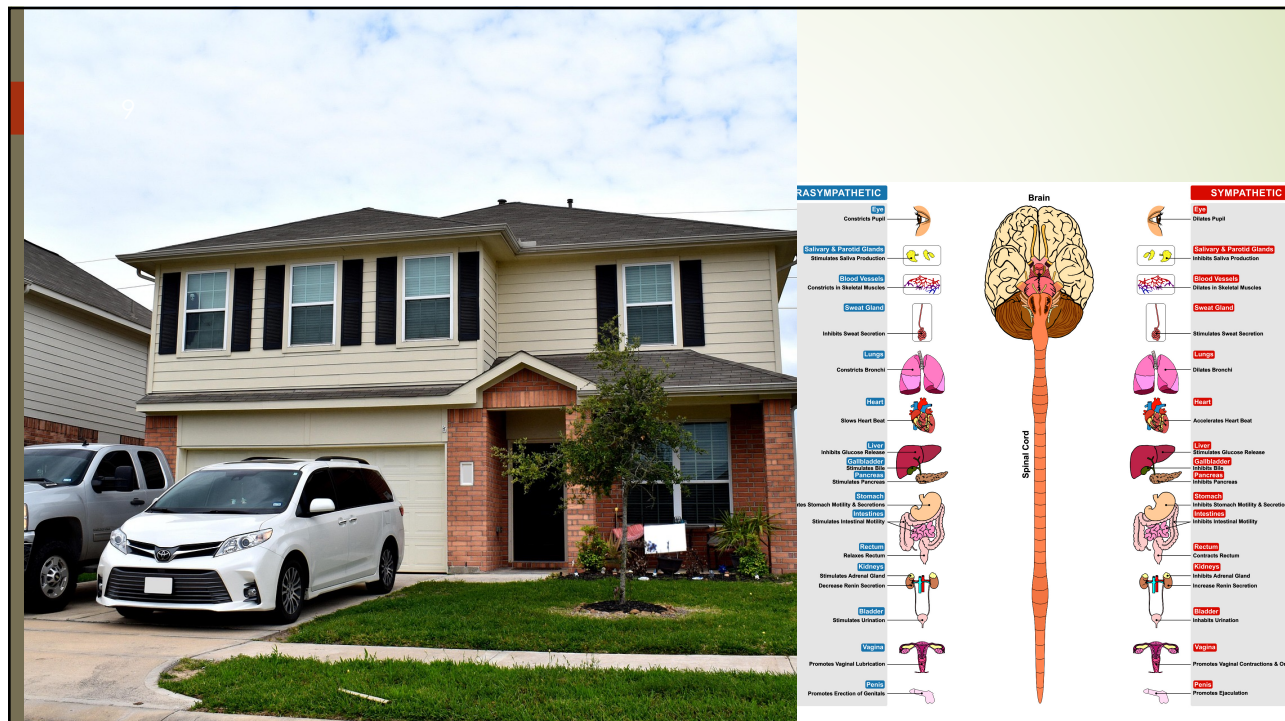
When Threat Steals Our Agency

- Agency is an ability
- ~~■ Make decisions~~
- ~~■ Act independently~~

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When Threat Steals Our Agency

Threat / catastrophe

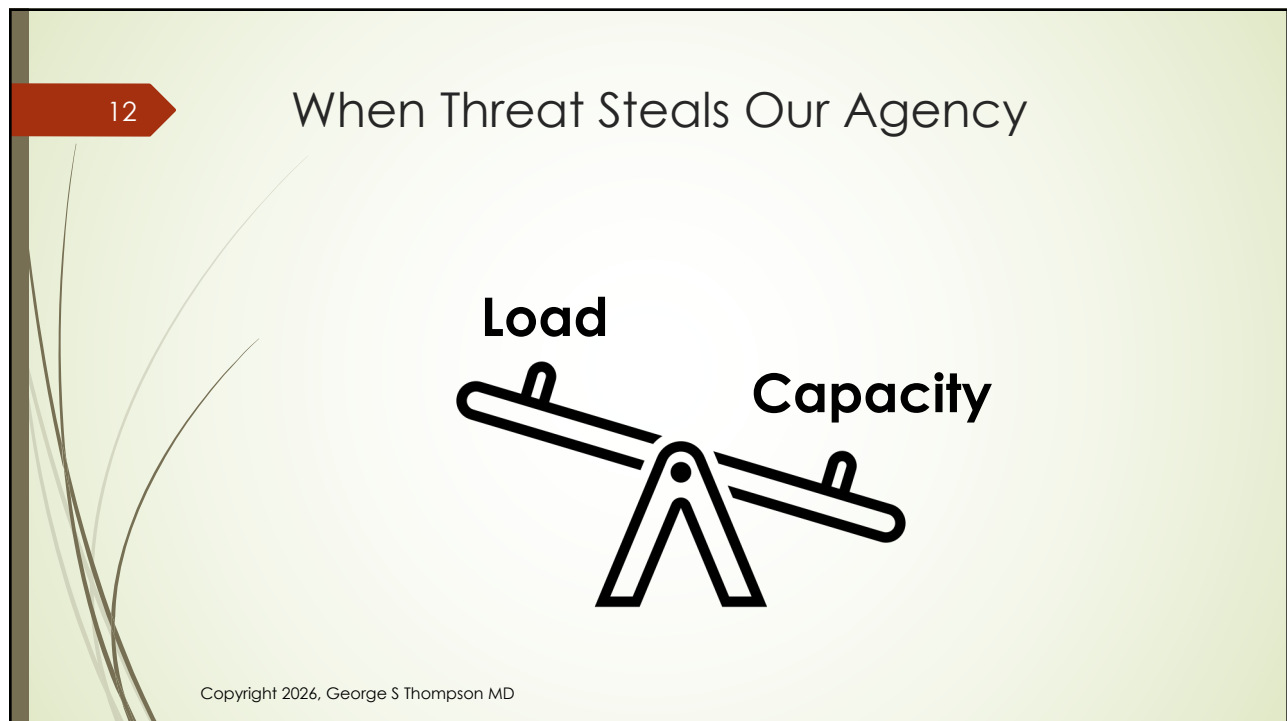
- **Load exceeds capacity**
- **Defensive neurophysiology**
(fight-flight, shutdown-collapse)
- **Blocked agency**
(reduced ability to decide and act)

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Two ways to change the load-capacity balance

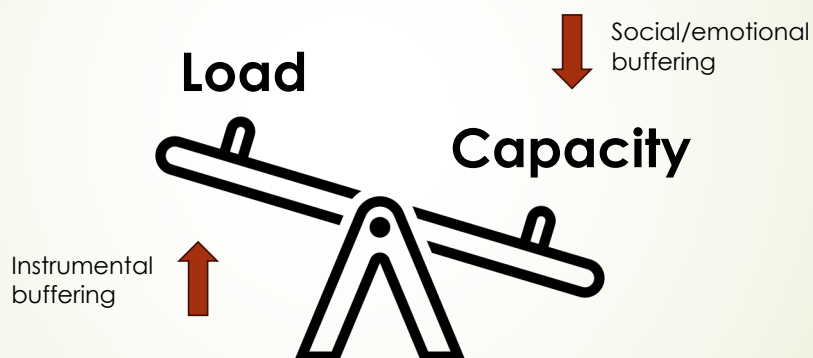
- ▀ **Instrumental (practical) buffering** takes weight off our shoulders.
- ▀ **Social/emotional buffering** helps us bear the same weight with greater ease.
- ▀ Both improve the balance between load and capacity, making effective action more available.

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Polyvagal Theory

PRINCIPLE 3 – Co-regulation

- One regulates another
- Sending signals of safety
- Reciprocal process
- Self-regulate to co-regulate



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Polyvagal Theory

PRINCIPLE 3 – Co-regulation

- Non-verbal signals of safety
 - Face, voice, posture
- Verbal signals of safety
 - Acceptance, empathy, curiosity



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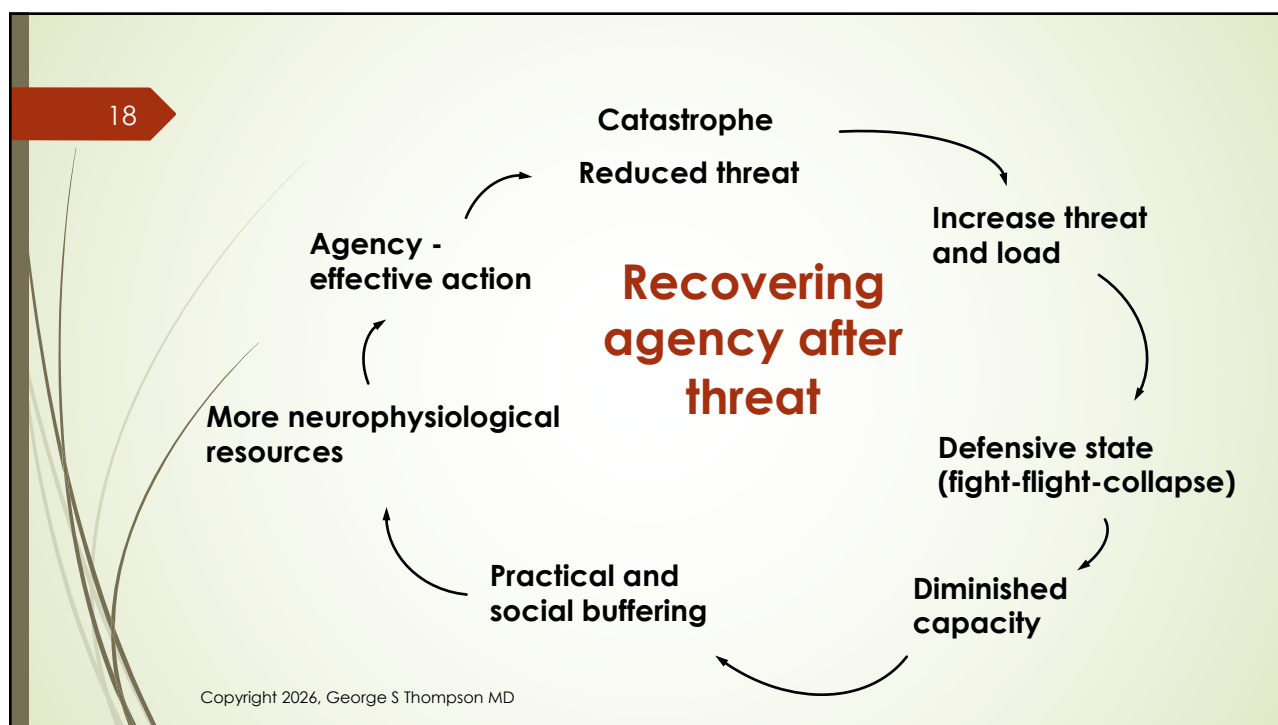
Adequate Buffering (task & emotion)

- Capacity exceeds load
- Regulated open state
- Executive function returns
- Available agency
- Reduced threat

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When Threat Steals Our Agency

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