



### International Tapping Month Week 3: Unexpected Life Interruptions

This is a brief introduction to Polyvagal Theory and how we can use it for tapping for

**“Unexpected life interruptions”**  
such as the pandemic and “social isolation.”

- Lorna Minewiser, PhD

One of the main tenets of Polyvagal theory (Porges) is that our nervous system responds to cues of threat and safety from our external and internal environments. Most of us are familiar with the sympathetic nervous system and “fight or flight “. When our sympathetic nervous system is activated we can feel anxious, agitated or aroused, even if we can’t run or fight, it’s about helping us mobilize to deal with the threat. (both real and perceived).

The parasympathetic nervous system has two main parts: the dorsal vagal and the ventral vagal.

The dorsal vagal is the earliest part to develop and when there is threat that can’t be addressed by “fight or flight”, the dorsal vagal can cause us to be in “freeze or flop”. We can become numb, shutdown, feeling helpless or hopeless or stuck. The Dorsal vagal nerve enervates the organs and muscles below the diaphragm.

The ventral vagal is our social engagement system, where we feel safe, connected and engaged. It runs from the brain to the diaphragm and enervates the upper body, especially the heart and the face. We cycle in and out of these states, but we can also get caught in sympathetic or dorsal vagal, especially if we have unresolved trauma.

The unexpected life interruption that we’ve been experiencing can cause us to be hyper-alert or shutdown. Getting into the ventral vagal state of social engagement and safety may be more difficult when there are real and perceived threats from the environment. Even the unexpectedness of the interruptions from the last 6 months can be perceived as a threat. It is healthier for us to try to get or return to the ventral vagal states of feeling safe and connected.

I heard Deb Dana a polyvagal therapist advise that we need to frequently do things throughout the day that get us back to ventral vagal-like tapping or other energy psychology methods. If we are in dorsal vagal, it is necessary to move through sympathetic to get to ventral vagal. You can look at the energy of sympathetic as energized and mobilized, and not stay there.



### International Tapping Month Week 3: Unexpected Life Interruptions

So, before you begin tapping take a few moments to do a brief body scan and see where you are.

- Are you feeling shutdown, helpless, hopeless, even immobilized? (dorsal vagal)
- Are you feeling agitated, anxious, ready to just run away, or fight with someone? (sympathetic)
- Do you feel safe, connected, engaged? (ventral vagal)

You can choose one of the following outlines to tap to move from dorsal vagal to sympathetic, to ventral vagal. If you are in sympathetic, start there. If you are in ventral vagal, tap to stay there.

**Note: If you have experienced trauma that you haven't worked to release, please address this with a trauma informed (polyvagal aware) EFT practitioner.**

For all three areas ask yourself:

1. How are you feeling?
2. Where are you feeling it in your body?
3. What are you telling yourself?

What are your SUDs on your feelings, the intensity in your body and your thoughts? Write each of these down and give them a SUDs level. You can go through each feeling or a few feelings during each round. Notice how you feel after each round. You can add where you're feeling the feeling in your body.

#### Dorsal Vagal

For example: *Even though I'm stuck in dorsal vagal because of this pandemic and I'm feeling hopeless and it's in my stomach..... or Even though I'm stuck in ventral vagal because of the lockdown and I feel frozen and helpless in my lower back .....*

Begin tapping on the side of your hand and repeat the following statement:

*Even though this interruption to my life is so unexpected that I'm stuck in dorsal vagal and I'm feeling \_\_\_\_\_(your feelings here) I accept how I feel and I am open to changing this.*

*Even though we never expected this year to be like this, and I'm stuck in dorsal vagal and I'm feeling \_\_\_\_\_(feeling) in \_\_\_\_\_(body part) I accept how I feel and I'm open to releasing it.*



### International Tapping Month Week 3: Unexpected Life Interruptions

#### **Dorsal Vagal - continued**

*Even though this year has not gone the way I expected it to and I feel ..... because of social isolation I accept how I feel and I'm open to releasing it.*

Tapping through the points (begin with stuck in dorsal vagal) and tapping on your feelings at each tapping point.

Repeat several rounds with your feelings, add in where you feel the feelings. Notice any changes. Do a round or so on your thoughts:

*Example: Even though this interruption to my life is so unexpected that I'm stuck in dorsal vagal and sometimes I think it's never going to end, I am open to changing how I think and feel.*

*Even though we never expected the year to be like this and I'm stuck in dorsal vagal and sometime I think \_\_\_\_\_ I'm open to (looking at some other possibilities.)*

*Even though this year has not gone the way I expected it to and I'm stuck in dorsal vagal, sometime I believe \_\_\_\_\_, I'm open to \_\_\_\_\_.*

Check your SUDs after each round. You can combine thinking and feeling rounds if you still feel stuck, but try adding the "I'm open to" statements that help pull you out of dorsal vagal and move towards sympathetic and then ventral vagal.

#### **Sympathetic Activation**

*For example: Even though I'm stuck in sympathetic system activation because of this unexpected pandemic and I'm feeling anxious and it's in my chest or Even though I'm stuck in sympathetic activation because of the lockdown and I feel angry and or panicked in my neck and shoulders... ..*

*Begin tapping on the side of your hand and repeat the following statement:*

*Even though this interruption to my life is so unexpected that I'm stuck in sympathetic nervous system activation and I'm feeling \_\_\_\_\_ (your feelings here) I accept how I feel, and I am open to changing this.*



### International Tapping Month Week 3: Unexpected Life Interruptions

#### **Sympathetic Activation – continued**

*Even though we never expected this year to be like this, and I'm stuck in sympathetic and I'm feeling \_\_\_\_\_(feeling) in \_\_\_\_\_(body part) I accept how I feel and I'm open to releasing it.*

*Even though this year has not gone the way I expected it to and I ..... because of social isolation I accept how I feel and I'm open to releasing it.*

Tapping through the points (begin with stuck in sympathetic) and tapping on your feelings at each tapping point.

Repeat several rounds with your feelings, add in where you feel the feelings. Notice any changes. Do a round or so on your thoughts:

*Example: Even though this interruption to my life is so unexpected that I'm stuck in sympathetic and sometimes I think it's never going to end, I am open to changing how I think and feel.*

*Even though we never expected the year to be like this and I'm stuck in sympathetic and sometime I think \_\_\_\_\_ I'm open to (looking at some other possibilities.)*

*Even though this year has not gone the way I expected it to and I'm stuck in sympathetic, sometime I believe \_\_\_\_\_, I'm open to \_\_\_\_\_.*

Check your SUDs after each round. You can combine thinking and feeling rounds if you still feel stuck, but try adding the "I'm open to" statements that help pull you out of sympathetic and move towards ventral vagal.

#### **Ventral Vagal**

*For example: Even though this unexpected life interruption has caused so many problems for so many people, right here, right now I feel safe and grateful to be alive.*

*Or: Even though we're in this pandemic, I'm feeling hopeful because so many scientists are trying to find solutions and I'm feeling grateful to be alive.*

Begin tapping on the side of your hand and repeat the following statement:

*Even though this interruption to my life is so unexpected I'm feeling \_\_\_\_\_(your feelings here) I accept how I feel and I want to feel this way more frequently.*

*Even though we never expected this year to be like this, I feel ..... And .....*



### International Tapping Month Week 3: Unexpected Life Interruptions

*Even though this year has not gone the way I expected it to, and I have felt social isolation, I am for all  
.....*

Tapping through the points (I'm in ventral vagal) and tapping on your feelings at each tapping point.

Repeat several rounds with your feelings, add in where you feel the feelings. Notice any changes. Do a round or so on your thoughts:

*Example: Even though this interruption to my life is so unexpected that I can get stuck in dorsal vagal or sympathetic activation I choose to move to ventral vagal as frequently as I can.*

*Even though we never expected the year to be like this and I think .....*

*Even though this year has not gone the way I expected it to and sometime I believe \_\_\_\_\_, I'm open to \_\_\_\_\_.*