

Nervous System & Trauma: Before & After Worksheet

1. How Your Nervous System Works (Before Trauma)

Your nervous system helps you **respond to life safely**. It has three main parts:

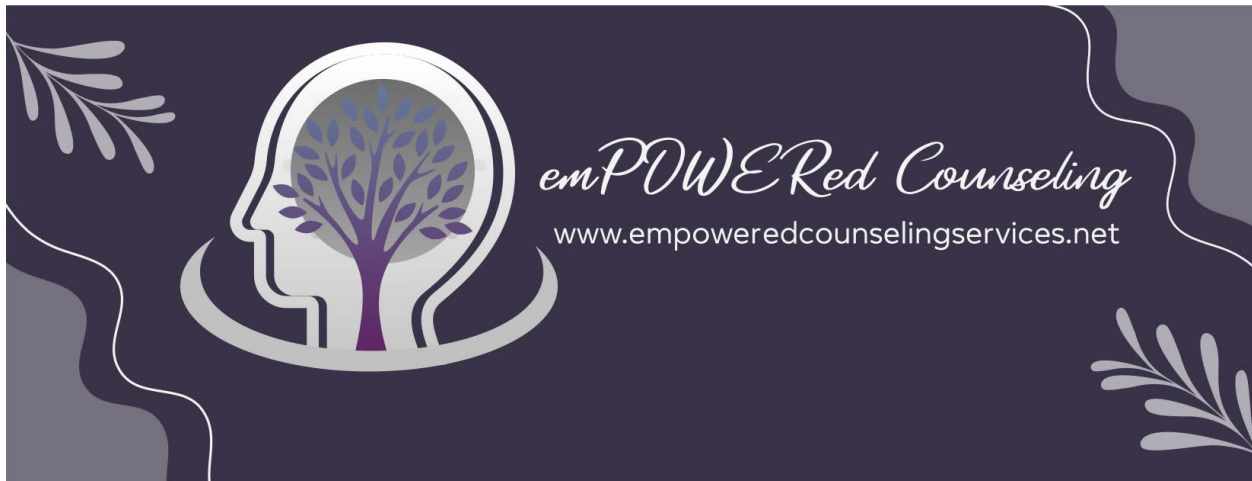
System	Function	How You Feel Normally
Parasympathetic (“Rest & Digest”)	Helps you relax, digest, sleep, connect with others	Calm, safe, able to enjoy activities
Sympathetic (“Fight or Flight”)	Activates alertness and energy to protect you from danger	Focused, ready to respond, energized
Dorsal Vagal (“Freeze / Shut Down”)	Conserves energy during extreme threat	Numb, dissociated, disconnected

Activity: Check how you usually feel in each system:

Parasympathetic: [] calm [] connected [] rested

Sympathetic: [] alert [] focused [] motivated

Dorsal Vagal: [] quiet [] withdrawn [] frozen



2. How Trauma Can Change Your Nervous System

Trauma can **shift your system into survival mode** more often, even when there is no danger.

Trauma Effect	Symptoms You Might Notice	Nervous System Activation
Hypervigilance	Racing heart, tense muscles, jumpiness	Sympathetic
Anxiety / Panic	Overthinking, worry, irritability	Sympathetic
Numbness / Shutdown	Feeling disconnected, “spacing out”	Dorsal Vagal
Sleep / Digest Issues	Trouble relaxing, low energy	Dysregulated balance

Activity: Check the reactions you notice in yourself:

- racing heart
- muscle tension
- dissociation
- irritability
- sleep problems
- other: _____