



Your Nervous System is Trying to Protect You

Your nervous system is a Loyal Protector that sometimes overworks. I know that we went over this briefly in an earlier email. This month we are going to look at this information in more detail.

Your body is not against you. Everyday your nervous is trying to protect you. What often happens in chronic illness; however, the nervous system doesn't realize that the danger has passed. What happens in your body looks like this:

- Your nervous system is a loyal guard dog. It stays alert and aware of the situations of your life.
- It barks to alert you and protect you (Fight or Flight). This can look like irritability, anger, or frustration in the Fight response. It can look like anxiety, restlessness, racing thoughts, or avoiding situations in a Flight response.
- In chronic illness often everything, anything or nothing can look like a threat or feels like a danger. The loyal guard dog begins to bark at everything as if it were a threat or a danger. It becomes exhausted and just wants to lie down and whimper (Frozen). This can look like shutdown, brain fog, numbness, or feeling stuck in a Frozen response.

Let's focus this information on you.

Recall a recent time that you felt overwhelmed, scared or even angry about how chronic illness is affecting your life:

Instead of thinking about the topic or concern that made you feel threatened or afraid focus on what your body was feeling in that moment. Did you feel your heartrate quicken? Did muscle tension or pain become more severe? Did you feel waves of fatigue or exhaustion wash over you? Did you feel like you fix it or control the feelings of danger/threat?

Take a few seconds and recall this experience and write down what happened within your body. Again, this is NOT about recalling what you were thinking about or the circumstances but the actual physical/ body experience. What did your body feel?

Healing is not about stopping these responses. It is about gently helping the body feel safe again. It is about bringing you back to the present moment where there is no danger or threat. It is about:

- Noticing your breath.
- Feeling where your body is supported.
- Orienting yourself to your physical environment. (What do you see around you? What do you hear around you? What do you smell? What is your hand or foot touching?)
- Speaking kindly and gently to yourself that brings you into the present moment instead of stuck in a fear about the future or frustration of the past.

Simple reframes are often helpful when you allow yourself to get into the present moment and safe within a relaxed body:

- My body is trying to protect me. I am safe.
- I can be curious about these feelings instead of critical, afraid, or angry.
- I can learn to work with my nervous system.
- My body is not my enemy.

We are going to talk about this in more detail when we get together.

