

## Session: 4136 **Emotional Muscle for a Trauma-Sensitive Work-Out**

Yoga/Pilates, Live In Person

Claudia Micco - Worldwide traumatic events have heightened anxiety, depression, phobias, and physical distress. Prolonged stress becomes a part of our biography, showing itself in subtle ways that can prevent us from living fully heightened lives. Join us to explore how this distress shows in us and three theories of how the right kind of movement may yield antidepressant effects as she shares three of her proven, simple strategies.



### **Emotional Muscle for a Trauma-Sensitive Work-Out**

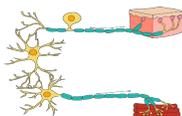
Over time, chronic muscular tension, combined with stress responses to the **Autonomic Nervous System**, creates unresolved tension that keeps a person stuck in their suffering and trauma. We can support our clients by understanding these brain and body responses, knowing what to look for, and how to program our clients through them. It is not all in their head! Let's

look at the autonomic nervous system, its parts, and functions and explore the possibilities.

### **Defining the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS)**



The **ANS** is commonly referred to as part of the nervous system that is involuntary and maintains essential functional balance. The **ANS** is usually divided into **two** complementary branches, the **sympathetic** and **parasympathetic** nervous systems. **Recently, an additional nerve group has been added because its actions are involuntary and critical for survival and** reciprocal acts between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems.



1. **The Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS)** is considered a primitive passive feeding and reproduction system that creates the metabolic base of operation to manage oxygen and nourishment through the blood. This system gives us mobility for daily challenges and daytime alertness when functioning normally.



2. **The Parasympathetic Nervous System (PNS)** is a newer, more sophisticated set of responses that enable mobility for feeding, defense, and

reproduction through the limbs and the muscles. A typical functioning system is for rest and rebuilding, normal metabolism, heart rate, and digestion.

3. The modern and more sophisticated set of nerve responses is called the **Social Engagement System or Social Nervous System**. It is mainly involuntary functions that protect newborn humans during their long time of vulnerability. It creates a neural hardwire for bonding facial and vocal expressions to secure a mother's loving caregiving. It is a survival mechanism that continues throughout life, manifesting as involuntary forms of communication and social cooperation. This provides a state of arousal, which can be (hyper) excessive sympathetic or (hypo) parasympathetic states, which can be dangerous to the body

### Defining the Three-Part Autonomic Nervous System

For simplicity in our course, we will keep to the essential functions; the nerves and plexus run deep throughout the inner body.

1. **The Sympathetic:** The sympathetic trunk plus the cervical, celiac, and mesenteric ganglia. These nerves go down all organs and operate smooth muscles during normal daytime alertness, mobilization, and/or stressful fight or flight responses.
2. **The Parasympathetic:** Vagus nerve and the cranial nerves. These operate on baseline survival functions, including heart, lungs, digestion, and reproduction.
3. **The Social Engagement System or Social Nervous System:** The cranial nerves and vagus nerves operate involuntary actions of the face, voice, hearing, and related functions. The ventral vagus nerve also affects the heart.

### Why Is This Important?

#### What is the Normal functioning of the ANS?

1. **Social Functions:** Love, language, social organization, sex, afterglow, breath, vocalization, interaction, reciprocal play, contact, and communication.
2. **Sympathetic Functions:** Mobilization for daily challenges, recreational and vocational excitement, muscular activity, exercise, sex, climax, daytime alertness, and metabolism.
3. **Parasympathetic Functions:** Rest and rebuild, meditative states, sex, arousal, all four stages of sleep, baseline metabolism, heart, breath, and digestion.

Voluntary and involuntary functions overlap; most actions here could be either, but observation can be recognized and shifted. Autonomic processes are immediate and universal across different ages of age, gender, education, and culture. **The conscious mind cannot fully control face and body expressions. All actions are subtle and unconscious.** Many health conditions center on the autonomic nervous system, including immune problems, ADHD, psychosomatic issues, PTSD, \*CPTSD, etc.

### **Bodily Functions Involved in Recognizing the Stress/Trauma Response**

1. **Social:** Eye and voice contact, the capacity for empathy and social interaction, spontaneous feelings, and social context. Involuntary motor actions of the face and throat.
2. **Sympathetic:** Faster respiration, quicker heart rate or pulse, dilated pupils, pale skin color, increased sweating, cold skin, decreased digestion and peristalsis, mobilization behaviors, anxiety, anger, and fear.
3. **Parasympathetic:** Slower, deeper respiration, slower heart rate or pulse, decreased blood pressure, dry skin or warmth to touch, increased digestion and peristalsis; immobilization behaviors including indecisiveness, seclusion, and depression.

### **Three Strategies For Trauma-Sensitive Students**

1. **Associative, Focused (Mindful Movement):**
2. **Dissociative Practices**
3. **Social Support**

\*Clients dealing with betrayal trauma and traumas involving overwhelmingly painful actions from a trusted person are typical but usually not discussed. However, these are known to affect the social nervous system, as it is damaged on a subconscious and implicit memory level with long-lasting but reversible effects on wellness, resilience, and health.

**We support our clients by understanding how traumatic stress physically and mentally impacts the body.** We will focus our practice time and group workshop studies on learning specific activities and grounding exercises to enhance the

functioning of the autonomic nervous system while in a group fitness class or private training session.

Mahalo Claudia

Please go to my website: [www.claudiamicco.com](http://www.claudiamicco.com) to learn more about SS&C ACE continuing education courses and mind/body e-books to enhance your teaching skills.

#### Recommended Citations

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