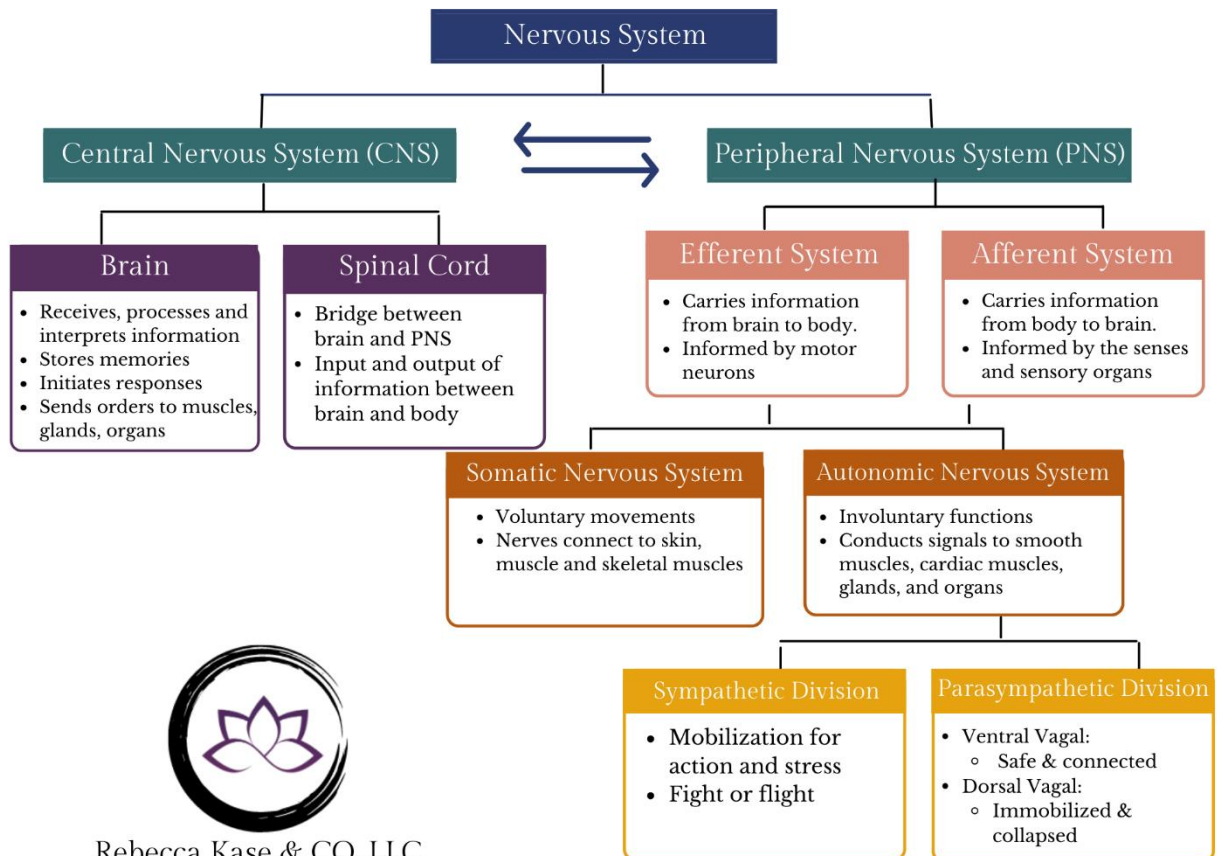


Conceptualizing Trauma & Adverse Life Experiences

Psychotherapists treat the nervous system. All clinical complaints, diagnoses, and symptoms can be traced back to dysfunction held in the nervous system. The nervous system is a complex system that consists of the central nervous system and peripheral nervous system. The nervous system does not objectively assess if something is “traumatic”. Rather, the nervous system responds to adversity and stress with hard wired defenses which are adaptive in nature and programmed for survival.

Stress is a normal part of life and isn’t necessarily bad. We experience stress when we take a test, give birth, exercise, or push our limits to try something new. Toxic stress however, can wreak havoc on the mind and body due to the adaptive responses that are evoked in the nervous system in attempts to cope and survive. It can be helpful to begin to shift conceptualization and assessment to understanding the functioning of the nervous system versus whether or not something is “traumatic”. Doing so is a neuro-informed approach to clinical work that focuses on the heart of the matter...the nervous system.



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