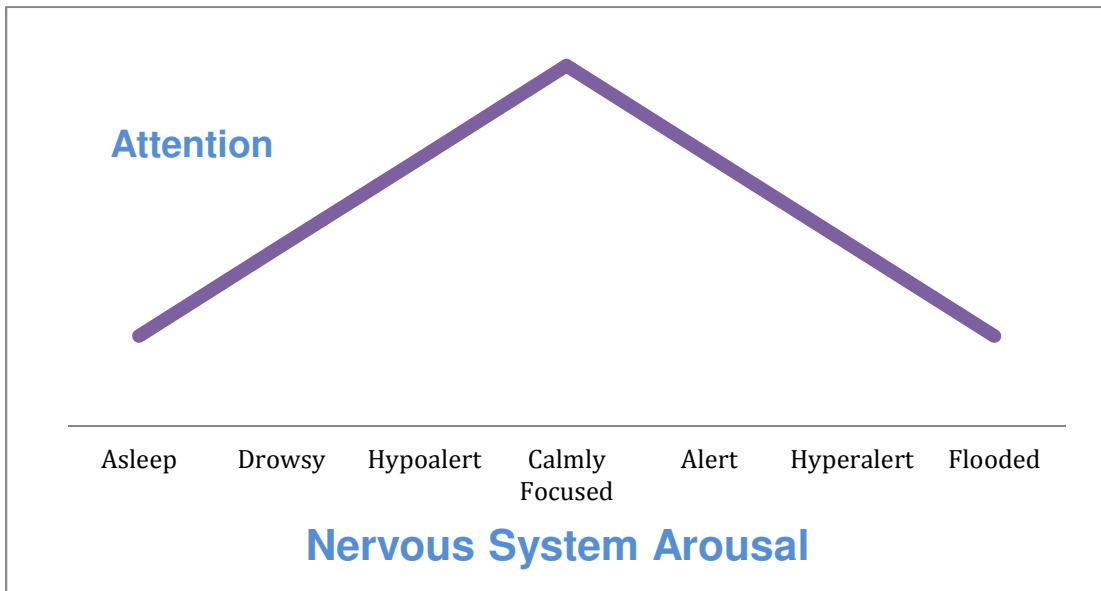


Self-Regulation

In order to attend to task, focus, and learn, our nervous systems need to be at an optimal level of arousal or alertness. We use different sensory experiences throughout the day to keep our nervous system at an optimal level of arousal through a process called *self-regulation*. If our nervous system is *below* the optimal level of arousal for the activity, a sensory experience that excites our nervous system (i.e. cold shower) would bring us up. If our nervous system is *above* the optimal level of arousal, a sensory experience that relaxes our nervous system (i.e. rocking in a rocking chair) would help calm us down.



A **sensory diet** can be set up for students to ensure they are getting enough sensory input throughout the day. A sensory diet is a daily “menu”, which would provide 2-4 sensory “meals” (15-30 minute sensory breaks when the student participates in a sensory activity that alerts or calms his/her nervous system) and sensory “snacks” (quick sensory activities that help maintain a calmly focused state of arousal or can be used to facilitate transitions between activities).

Sample Sensory Diet	
Time	Activity
9:00	<i>Sensory Meal: Heavy work job (i.e. stacking library books)</i>
9:30	Computer Activity
	<i>Sensory Snack: Shoulder “squishes” (5 minutes)</i>
10:00	Make pudding
10:30	<i>Sensory Meal: Walk to park with peers; play on swing</i>
11:00	Art Class
	<i>Sensory Snack: Back rub with vibrating massager</i>
11:30	Bathroom Routine