



Somatic Regulation

Here are simple, but powerful, practices you can do to regulate your autonomic nervous system by activating the parasympathetic branch of the vagal nerve. If done daily and consistently over time, these practices will help to regulate a nervous system that is stuck in chronic stress arousal. If any of these practices activate you, do the practices that do not activate, unless you are able to stay present with it.

PRACTICES FOR ACTIVATING VAGUS NERVE TO INCREASE PARASYMPATHETIC RESPONSE:

BREATHING

Practice breathing from the diaphragm. When we are in stress arousal, we breathe shallowly in the chest. As you inhale, allow the belly to expand, as you exhale, let the belly to fall back down. Allow the exhale to be longer than the inhale, as long as it will naturally go, without forcing it. Then allow the inhale to come back naturally without forcing it. In the beginning, it can be helpful to lay down and put your hand on your belly to practice this. Over time, the breath will return to its natural rhythm, which will help bring about the natural regulation the nervous system.

If the above is challenging, start with counting to 6 as you inhale and count to 9 as you exhale, pause for a count of 3, then inhale again. As this becomes easier, then see if you can allow the breath to move naturally in the diaphragm without counting.

HUMMING

Breathe and hum low tones with your mouth closed on the exhale. MMM. You can hum a tune, or a chant such as OM or OM AH HUM, or just hum. Do this for as long as it feels comfortable, and then if you can, rest for a while to allow it to integrate. This simple practice is powerful and will stimulate the ventral vagal nerve. You can also make a VOO sound. Humming can be done laying down, sitting as a meditation, or anytime while driving or cooking, etc.

MORE PRACTICES FOR VAGAL STIMULATION:

- Walking 50-60 minutes
- Being in nature and sunlight
- Laughing
- Socializing with safe people
- Diet: Eliminate or lower sugar
- Supplements: potassium and magnesium, probiotics, eat lots of greens, (If possible, work with a functional health practitioner to balance biochemical dis-regulation)

- Touching the lips (they have lots of parasympathetic fibers)
- Blowing air between the lips as they are loosely together (horse lips)
- Cold exposure: splash cold water on face, take cold shower or end hot shower with cold water for increasing amounts of time.
- Smiling—feel into the energy of the smile throughout your body
- Gargling with water
- Yawning (intentionally)
- Sighing—make AH sound on exhale

PRACTICES FOR BUILDING SAFETY, GROUNDING AND CENTERING:

SPIRITUAL HEART

Hold the heart area with both hands and breathe into that, sensing the compassion and loving kindness of the Spiritual Heart and sending that to yourself.

SENSES

Being with all 5 senses with attention and enjoyment. Look around and see 2-3 things that are pleasing and take in how it feels to look at them. Touching 2-3 things that feel good to touch and taking that in. Do the same with hearing, smell and taste. Notice after each one how you feel in the body. If the system is regulated enough, trace each sense back to its source and the felt sense of the aware space that is hearing, seeing, etc. This grounds you in the body in a safe way.

BUILDING SAFETY

1. Place your right hand under left arm pit and place the left hand on right shoulder. Hold yourself in this embrace and feel the sense of containment and safety. 2. Place left hand on forehead and right hand on upper chest, 3. Keep upper hand on forehead and move lower hand to belly. Bring awareness to the body's response to this. You can do whatever combination you like of these 3 exercises.

HANDS AND FEET

Feel the sensations in your feet or hands, fingertips. You can also feel the hands and feet together. Feel the Earth energy rising through the feet into the body. Warm hands and feet if cold. Feel the feet, your seat on chair or ground, and your back if against chair. This grounds you in body.

JIGGLING

To release tension in the body, stand up and bounce up and down with your knees while having your arms hanging free and shake them. You are bouncing and shaking your arms and can also make sounds such as AH or blow air between your lips (horse lips). Do for at least one minute.

ROCKING

Rocking slowly and gently side to side and back and front. Feel the soothing quality of the rocking. Gradually stop rocking as you find a center point. Sense into how it feels to be in your center.

PATTING

Gently patting all over the body with your hands. Sense into the contact with your body. This connects you to your body in a safe way.

ORIENTING

Slowly look around from one side to another, just taking in what you see in a relaxed way with the senses. This is soothing for the nervous system and helps us let go of hypervigilance.