

NERVOUS SYSTEM REGULATION

WORKSHEET & TECHNIQUES FOR INNER BALANCE



HANDS-ON METHODS FOR STRESS
RELIEF AND SELF-REGULATION

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WELCOME TO *YOUR* INNER BALANCE WORKBOOK

You're stepping into a different kind of journey, one that isn't about pushing harder or following someone else's rules. This is about creating safety in your own body first, because you can't burn the old playbook or build a new one if your nervous system is in chaos. Regulation is the ground you stand on before you rise.



What Is Nervous System Support?

Your nervous system is the command center for how you respond to life. It decides whether you feel calm enough to dream, safe enough to speak up, or too triggered to even think straight. When your “stress” system (sympathetic) and your “rest + recover” system (parasympathetic) are in sync, you feel steady and resourced. But when they're out of balance, you might notice anxiety, burnout, numbness, or the sense that you're always behind.

Why Balance Matters

Here's the truth: you can't think or strategize your way out of dysregulation. Your body has built-in pathways for safety, through breath, movement, digestion, even the pace of your heartbeat. When you learn to work with these tools instead of overriding them, you stop fighting yourself. That's when things start to shift.



How This Workbook Helps

Inside, you'll practice simple, powerful tools that helped me change how I handled stress, business, and even relationships:

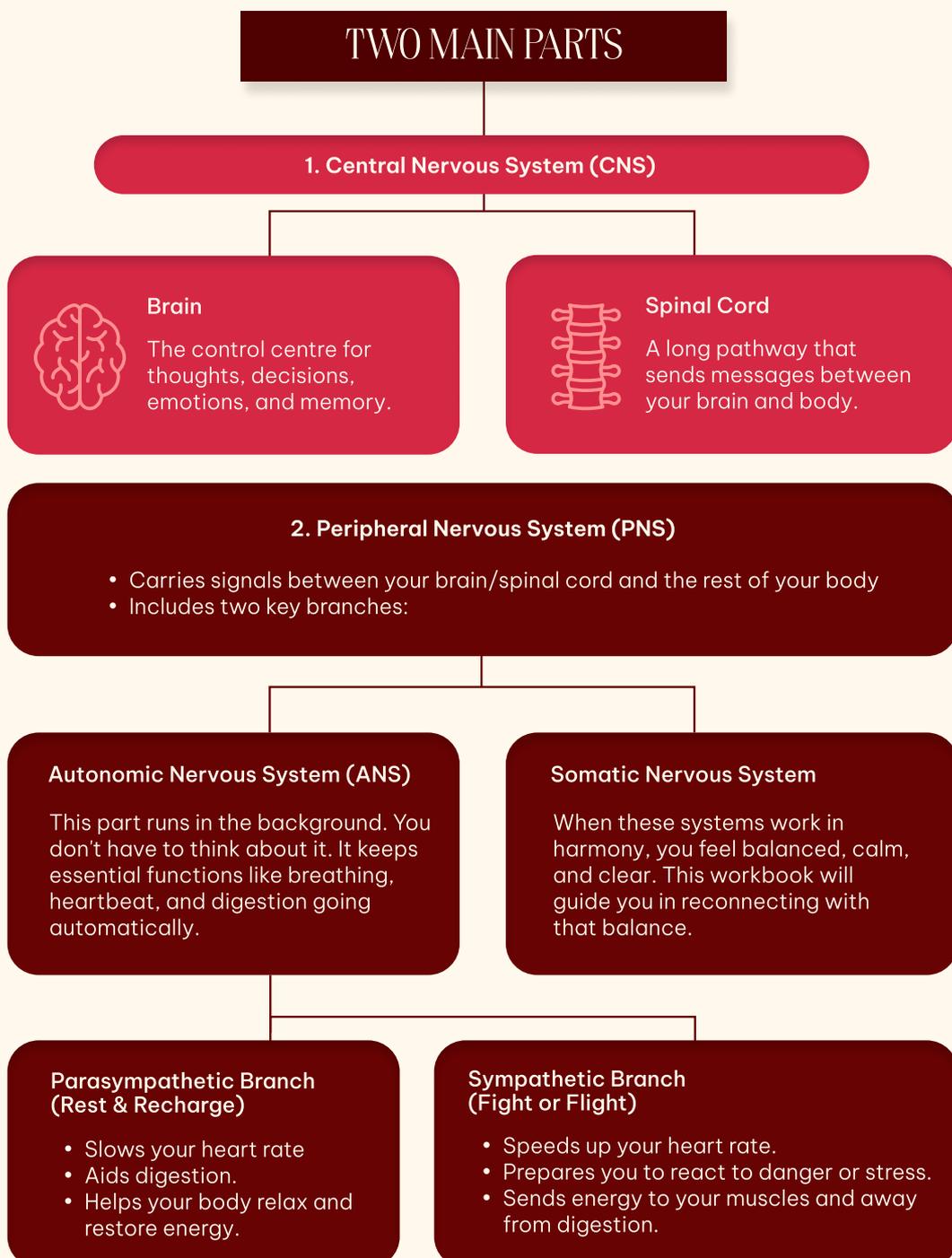
Tuning in to your body's signals instead of ignoring them. Using techniques like breathwork, grounding, and mindful reflection to bring yourself back into safety

Re-learning how it feels to move through the world from calm instead of chaos.

Go gently. Pause when you need to. Come back as often as you like. This isn't about “fixing yourself”. It's about giving your nervous system enough safety to finally write your own rules.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM

Think of your nervous system as the wiring that runs your entire life. It's not just science, it's the switchboard that decides if you feel safe enough to rest, bold enough to speak your truth, or stuck in survival mode. It's what lets you move, think, feel, and respond. When it's regulated, you have clarity and capacity. When it's dysregulated, you might find yourself spinning in stress, shutting down, or repeating old patterns that no longer fit the life you're trying to build.



THE PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM

The parasympathetic system is your body's way of whispering, "You're safe now. You can let go." It's the part of you that slows things down – helping you rest, digest, recover, and feel grounded again. If your sympathetic system is the accelerator that gets you ready for action, the parasympathetic is the brake that reminds you balance is possible.

When the two are working together, you move through life with flow: you can rise to the challenge when you need to, and you can come back to calm when it's over. That rhythm – respond, then restore – is what keeps you steady enough to burn the old playbook and write your own rules.

What Is Homeostasis?

Your body is always fighting for balance, a state called homeostasis. Even when you're not aware of it, your system is quietly adjusting your temperature, breath, heartbeat, and digestion to keep you in that "just right" zone.

Think of it as your body's built-in reset button. No matter how much chaos is happening outside, your biology is wired to bring you back to center. The more you learn to work with that natural rhythm instead of overriding it, the safer and steadier you'll feel, and safety is the foundation for burning the old rules and creating your own.

How Your Body Responds When You're in Rest Mode.



Brain: Supports calm thoughts and peace of mind

Heart: slows down your heartbeat to help you relax



Lungs: Deep, steady breaths become easier

Digestion: Stimulates gut movement and supports digestion



Muscles: Reduces tension so you feel looser and more at ease

Eyes: Pupils shrink. Your body senses you're safe



THE VAGUS NERVE

Your Body's Natural Reset Button

The vagus nerve is like the body's internal safety switch. It runs from your brain down through your chest and gut, sending signals that say, "It's okay. You can breathe. You can rest now." It's the star player in your parasympathetic system, the part that brings you out of fight-or-flight and back into calm. When you activate it, your body remembers how to slow down, recover, and feel safe again.

Learning how to work with your vagus nerve is like reclaiming your own power switch, because you can't write new rules for your life if your body is still stuck in survival mode.

Quick Facts About the Vagus Nerve



- It's part of your body's "rest & restore" system.
- Known as cranial nerve X, it's the longest nerve in your nervous system.
- It starts in the brainstem and travels down to the heart, lungs, and digestive system.
- It helps carry out calming functions like slower breathing, steady heartbeat, and easier digestion.

Learning how to support your vagus nerve (through breath, stillness, or gentle movement) can be a powerful way to reset during stress.

POLYVAGAL THEORY

Understanding the Two Sides of Your Vagus Nerve

Your body doesn't respond to stress in just one way. Polyvagal Theory explains that the vagus nerve has two branches, each shaping how you react: one that supports connection and safety, and another that shuts things down when stress feels overwhelming.

One helps you stay socially connected and calm

Ventral Vagal System

This branch turns on when your body senses safety. It helps you feel:



Calm and steady



Open to connection



Emotionally regulated

The other helps you shut down to survive when things feel too much

Dorsal Vagal System

This branch activates in times of extreme overwhelm or threat. It's your body's way of saying: "This is too much - I need to shut down. You may feel:



Disconnected or numb



Like you're frozen or collapsing inside



Exhausted, withdrawn, or anxious

POLYVAGAL THEORY

Your Body's 3 Safety Gears

Your nervous system shifts between three different "gears" depending on how safe or threatened you feel. Each state is a way your body tries to protect and support you.

RED GEAR – FREEZE (Dorsal Vagus)

1.

When your body feels overwhelmed or unsafe, it might shut down completely. This is the "freeze" or "play dead" mode – your body slows down to protect itself.

- You might feel numb, faint, heavy, or like you're disappearing
- Think: fainting, dissociating, or freezing in fear



YELLOW GEAR – FIGHT/FLIGHT (Sympathetic System)

2.

In this state, your body prepares to move fast. You might feel anxious, edgy, or over-alert – ready to fight or flee.

- Your heart races, breathing speeds up, and muscles tense
- Think: high stress, panic, or the rush after too much caffeine



GREEN GEAR – SAFE & CONNECTED (Ventral Vagus)

3.

This is your body's rest and connect mode. When you feel safe, calm, and supported, this gear helps you:

- Connect with others, manage emotions, feel grounded and steady
- Think: laughing with friends, deep breathing, or feeling at ease in nature.



POLYVAGAL THEORY

The Ladder of Nervous System States

VENTRAL VAGUS – CALM, CONNECTED, AND SECURE

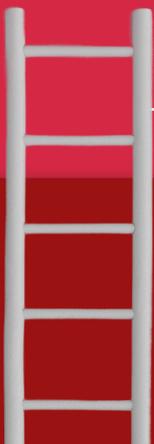
Thoughts You Might Have: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I feel safe and at ease• I'm present and open	Emotional Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Peaceful, curious, connected to others	Body Responses: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relaxed digestion and breathing• Healthy immune response• Strong sense of resilience
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SYMPATHETIC – ALERT, ANXIOUS, OR REACTIVE

Thoughts You Might Have: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I need to protect myself• Something isn't right	Emotional Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stress, panic, or frustration• Feeling "on edge" or wired	Body Responses: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fast heartbeat and tense muscles• Senses sharpened• Breathing becomes shallow
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DORSAL VAGUS – SHUT DOWN OR DISCONNECTED

Thoughts You Might Have: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I feel numb and invisible• I just want to disappear	Emotional Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Numbness, hopelessness, deep sadness• Feeling cut off from the world	Body Responses: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low energy and slowed systems• Disconnection from others• Increased stress chemicals in the body
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NERVOUS SYSTEM CHECK-IN

Self-Reflection Worksheet - Part 1 of 3

Why This Matters.

Tuning into how your body responds to stress and emotional overwhelm can help you better support your well-being. This page helps you notice common signs of nervous system dysregulation - gently and without judgment. There are no right or wrong answers. Go at your own pace, and be honest with yourself. This is for you.

Step 1: Notice & Name What You're Feeling

For each symptom below, write:

- How often does it happen (Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Rarely)
- How intense it feels (0 = not at all, 10 = extremely intense)
- Also note the time period you're reflecting on:

SYMPTOMS	HOW OFTEN?	HOW INTENSE? (0-10)
Headaches		
Muscle tension		
Stomach discomfort		
Fast heartbeat		
Trouble breathing		
Trouble sleeping/sleeping too much		
Feeling tired all the time		
Trouble focusing		



Tip: Don't overthink, just notice. Awareness is the first step to gentle regulation and healing.

NERVOUS SYSTEM CHECK-IN

Self-Reflection Worksheet - Part 2 of 3

2. Emotional Awareness

Think back over the past week. How often have you felt each emotion listed below? Use a scale from 0 to 10 – where 0 means “not at all” and 10 means “felt constantly.”

EMOTION	YOUR RATING (0-10)
Anxiety	
Sadness	
Joy	
Anger	

3. Behavioural Responses

When you're feeling overwhelmed or stressed, how do you tend to respond?
Check the behaviours that apply to you – and note how often you notice them happening.

EMOTION	OFTEN	SOMETIMES	RARELY	NEVER
I pull away from social connection				
I delay or avoid things I need to do				
I cope with food, shopping, or screen time				
I feel restless or have bursts of energy				
I turn to substances to numb or escape				



This worksheet is about noticing patterns with kindness to better support yourself.

NERVOUS SYSTEM CHECK-IN

Self-Reflection Worksheet - Part 1 of 3

4. What Helps You Relax?

Let's take a look at the calming tools you've tried - and how well they work for you. Rate each one from 0 (not helpful) to 10 (very helpful) based on your own experience.

CALMING PRACTICE	EFFECTIVENESS (0-10)
Deep breathing exercises	
Progressive muscle relaxation	
Gentle movement (like yoga or tai chi)	
Meditation or mindfulness	
Physical activity or regular exercise	



It's about finding what supports your nervous system and returning to track or try new things.

STRESS REFLECTION WORKSHEET

Page 1 of 2 - Noticing Patterns With Kindness

TWO MAIN PARTS

When you track how your body and mind react to stress, you begin to notice patterns. This awareness can help you respond with more care instead of reacting automatically. Use this worksheet throughout the week to gently reflect on stressful moments.

THE COGNITIVE TRIANGLE



1. What Happened?

Briefly describe a recent moment that caused stress. Include what was happening, when it occurred, and who was involved (if relevant).

2. What Did Your Body Do?

Note any physical sensations you experienced in the moment - like a racing heart, clenched jaw, sweating, or shallow breath.

STRESS REFLECTION WORKSHEET

Page 2 of 2 - Noticing Patterns With Kindness

3. How Did You Feel?

Describe how you felt during and after the situation. You might include emotions like anxiety, frustration, sadness, helplessness, or shame.

Use this space to let your emotions be seen – no need to filter or judge them.

4. How Did You Feel?

What thoughts ran through your mind at the time? Include things like: Worries, self-criticism, "what if" thoughts, unhelpful beliefs or mental spirals.

Gentle Reflection Prompts:

- Are these thoughts true or just my mind's way of protecting me?
- Are these thoughts kind or supportive?
- Is there a gentler or more accurate thought I could offer myself?
- How might I feel if I truly believed that kinder thought?



Duplicate this worksheet anytime—each entry builds understanding and compassionate support.

UNDERSTANDING REGULATION, DYSREGULATION & CO-REGULATION

REGULATION

Regulation is when your body and emotions feel steady and in control. You're able to shift from stress to calm, or from feeling low to feeling alert. Example: You feel anxious before a test, so you pause and take slow breaths. Your heart slows, and your thoughts clear. You feel more focused and calm.



DYSREGULATION

Dysregulation happens when your body stays stuck in stress or shutdown mode. It's harder to calm down, focus, or feel safe. Example: After a tough day at work, you feel overwhelmed and can't relax. You lie awake at night, tense and frustrated, even though you're exhausted.

CO-REGULATION

Co-regulation is when someone else helps you feel calmer – just by being kind, present, or connected. We all regulate better in safe relationships. You're having a hard day, and a friend sits beside you, listens without judgment, and reminds you you're not alone. You feel a little lighter.



You don't have to fix everything alone. Regulation and support lead to balance.

REGULATION REFLECTION

A Simple Check-In on What Helps
You Stay Grounded

Fill in the Following.

1. A Moment You Handled with Care:

Can you remember a recent time when you felt overwhelmed but were able to calm yourself down?

2. How Do You Know When You Feel Regulated?

Think about what it feels like in your body and mind when you're in a balanced state.



This reflection builds trust in your self-regulation and reveals what works for you.

DYREGULATION REFLECTION

A Gentle Look at What Throws You Off Balance

Fill in the Following.

1. A Time You Felt Off-Center

Can you remember a moment when your emotions felt really big or out of control?

2. What Did Your Body Feel?

When you're in a dysregulated state, what does your body tell you?

3. What Patterns Do You Notice?

Are there certain people, situations, or internal thoughts that tend to send you into dysregulation more often?



You're not broken—your body signals safety needs. Reflection helps ease them with care.

CO-REGULATION REFLECTION

Exploring Support, Connection & Emotional
Safety Part 1 of 2

Fill in the Following.

1. Who Helps You Feel Safe?

Think of someone in your life who helps you feel more grounded when you're overwhelmed.

2. A Moment of Co-Regulation

Describe a time when just being with someone else helped soothe your emotions.

3. Asking for Support

When you're dysregulated or upset, how easy is it for you to ask for help?

CO-REGULATION REFLECTION

Part 2 of 2- Moments of Connection & Calm

Fill in the Following.

4. A Memory of Feeling Safe with Others

Think of a time when you felt at ease and emotionally connected with someone. Who were you with? What were you doing that helped you feel socially safe, accepted, or understood?

5. Social Interactions That Soothe You

What kinds of social experiences leave you feeling grounded, seen, or at peace?



Co-regulation comes from small, safe connections that make a lasting difference.

EMOTIONAL AWARENESS WORKSHEET

Part 1 of 2 - Naming What You Feel, Noticing What You Need

1. WHAT ARE YOU FEELING RIGHT NOW?

Take a moment to check in with yourself. Describe the emotion you're experiencing in your own words. Try to be specific - instead of "bad," you might say "frustrated," "nervous," or "sad."

2. HOW STRONG IS IT?

On a scale from 0 to 10, how intense is this feeling right now?
(0 = barely noticeable, 10 = completely overwhelming)

3. WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE IN YOUR BODY?

Where does this emotion show up physically?
Notice sensations like: a tight chest, clenched jaw, butterflies in your stomach, shallow breathing, or anything else unique to you

4. WHAT BROUGHT IT ON?

What moment, thought, or situation might have triggered this feeling?



Naming emotions builds self-awareness and allows gentler support.

EMOTIONAL AWARENESS WORKSHEET

Part 2 of 2 - Support, Soothing & Reflection

5. WHAT THOUGHTS ARE PRESENT?

What's going through your mind right now?

6. CAN YOU ALLOW THIS FEELING?

Take a breath. Let yourself acknowledge what you're feeling - even if it's uncomfortable. Remind yourself: "It's okay to feel this way. Emotions are messengers, not enemies."

7. BREATHE INTO CALM

Pause and try a short breathing practice:
Inhale for 4... Hold for 4... Exhale for 6. Repeat for a minute or two.

8. REFRAME YOUR THOUGHTS

Is there a softer, more helpful way to think about this situation?
Try shifting a negative thought to something more balanced,

9. WHAT CAN I DO NEXT?

Is there a small, supportive step you can take to care for yourself
in this moment? (Even something simple, like stretching,
journaling, or reaching out)



Naming emotions builds self-awareness and allows gentler support.

EMOTIONAL AWARENESS WORKSHEET

Reflect & Reset

- Has the emotion changed in intensity after working through these steps?
- What have you learned about your emotional patterns today?
- Which tool or step helped you the most?



You just cared for your nervous system through self-regulation.

RESILIENCE: YOUR *INNER ANCHOR*

Staying Steady Through Life's Ups and Downs

What is Resilience?

Resilience is like a steady anchor during rough waters. It's your ability to stay grounded, or gently return to balance, when life feels overwhelming.

It doesn't mean you never struggle. It means you know how to support yourself through the storm.

Building a Brain-Friendly Life

Creating a resilient life means learning:

- What drains your energy or peace (like trauma, stress, or burnout)
- What helps you feel strong again (your personal tools and support)
- How you grow over time from the challenges you've faced.

What Does Resilience Look Like?

Resilience means:

- Bouncing back from setbacks.
- Learning from hard moments.
- Staying kind to yourself even when things feel heavy.

RESILIENCE IS ABOUT:	EXAMPLES INCLUDE:
Having a hopeful mindset.	Adaptability
Not giving up when it gets hard.	Optimism
Being open to learning from mistakes.	Self-Confidence
Taking small, steady steps forward.	Problem Solving
Letting yourself feel, but not stay stuck.	Emotional Regulation
Trusting your inner strength.	Flexibility & Determination



Guess what?

You are already more resilient than you know.
Every time you've made it through,
even in small way.

HOW TO *GROW RESILIENCE* IN DAILY LIFE:

Simple Practices That Nurture Your Inner Strength

BUILD A SUPPORTIVE CIRCLE

Surround yourself with people who encourage and comfort you. Whether it's friends, family, a support group, or a spiritual space – connection helps you feel less alone. Small moments of care from others can recharge your strength.



REFLECT ON WHAT YOU'VE OVERCOME

Think back on past challenges. What helped you move through them? What didn't? Journaling about these moments helps you recognize your patterns, celebrate your growth, and choose better tools for next time.



CHOOSE A HOPEFUL MINDSET

When life feels heavy, try to gently look ahead. Not with pressure – but with possibility. Let the future hold hope. Change can be a space for growth.



REMEMBER WHAT MATTERS TO YOU

What brings you meaning? It could be creativity, helping others, parenting, healing, learning, or simply living with kindness. When you reconnect with your "why," it's easier to keep going.



HOW TO *GROW RESILIENCE* IN DAILY LIFE:

Simple Practices That Nurture Your Inner Strength

PRIORITIZE GENTLE SELF – CARE

Take care of your nervous system like it matters – because it does. That means rest, nourishment, movement, fun, and breaks from stress. Even small acts (like stretching or sipping tea) count.

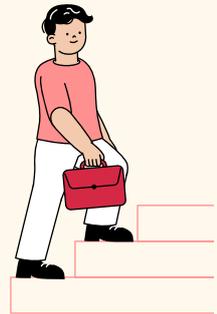


TAKE TINY STEPS FORWARD

Take care of your nervous system like it matters – because it does. Resilience isn't about being perfect. It's about showing up – one gentle step at a time.

When something feels hard, ask:

- What's one thing I can try today?
- What's one thing I need to feel more supported?



Resilience isn't just a trait – it's a skill you can build over time. Be proud of every step you take toward balance and inner peace.

RESILIENCE REFLECTION WORKSHEET

Looking Back to See How Far You've Come

Fill in the Following.

1. A Time You Felt Off-Center

Can you remember a moment when your emotions felt really big or out of control?

2. What Did Your Body Feel?

When you're in a dysregulated state, what does your body tell you?

3. What Patterns Do You Notice?

Are there certain people, situations, or internal thoughts that tend to send you into dysregulation more often?



You're not broken—your body signals safety needs. Reflection helps ease them with care.

BUILDING YOUR INNER + OUTER SUPPORT SYSTEM

Tools That Help You Feel Grounded, Calm, and Safe

WHAT COUNTS AS A "RESOURCE"?

In nervous system regulation, a resource is anything that helps your mind and body return to balance. It can be something inside you – like resilience or self-awareness. Or something outside – like a cozy space or a caring friend. Let's look at both.

INTERNAL RESOURCES (YOUR INNER STRENGTH)

- Mindfulness: Slowing down and noticing the present moment.
- Self-Awareness: Recognizing your emotions and what helps soothe them.
- Resilience: Your ability to recover after stress or setbacks.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES (SUPPORT AROUND YOU)

- Supportive Relationships: People you can talk to or feel safe with.
- Calming Environments: Places that feel peaceful or safe to you.
- Enjoyable Activities: Hobbies, games, or play that help you unwind.



POSITIVE MOMENTS JAR

A Simple Way to Boost Your Mood (and Train Your Brain for Joy)

WHY THIS HELPS.

Our brains are wired to notice danger, it's how we survived. But we can retrain our attention to notice the good, too.

Noticing small positive moments can:

- Support nervous system regulation
- Build a sense of emotional safety
- Strengthen your overall well-being

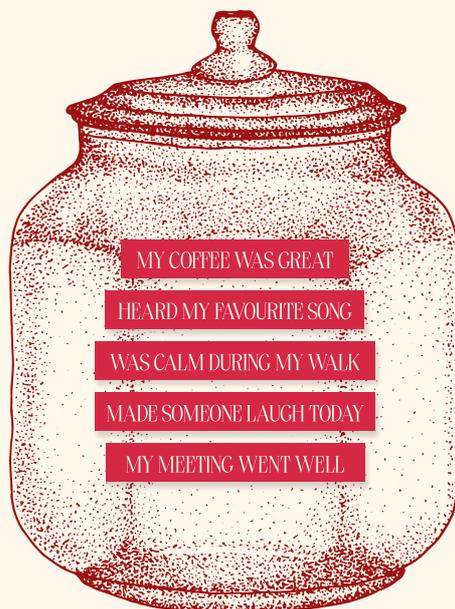
SETUP.

- Find an empty jar, box, or bowl, something you can see often
- Keep small slips of paper and a pen nearby

WHY IT MATTERS.

Every time you add to your jar, you're:

- Building emotional resilience
- Creating a resource you can revisit on hard days
- Teaching your brain to seek out the good



MORNING GRATITUDE REFLECTION

Looking Back to See How Far You've Come

WHY IT HELPS.

Gratitude isn't just a mindset - it's a nervous system tool. When you begin your day with appreciation, you activate calm, safety, and connection in your body and mind. Even the simplest acknowledgments - a warm drink, a kind smile, a quiet moment - can shift your entire day.

TRY THIS.

Take a deep breath. Gently reflect on three things you're grateful for today. These might include:

- People you love
- Small comforts or wins
- Growth you're proud of
- Opportunities or support systems around you

WHAT I'M GRATEFUL FOR TODAY.

1.

2.

3.

DEEP BREATHING PRACTICE

Feel grounded, calm, and centered in just a few minutes.

WHY IT HELPS

Deep breathing helps activate your vagus nerve, a key part of your nervous system that signals your body it's safe to relax.

By breathing slowly and deeply, you can naturally **lower your heart rate**, **calm your thoughts**, and shift into a more restful, balanced state.

GENTLE HOW-TO STEPS

1. Find Your Calm Space

Sit or lie down in a quiet, cozy spot where you feel safe and relaxed.

2. Place Your Hands

Rest one hand on your chest and the other on your belly. This helps you stay connected to your breath.

3. Breathe In

Inhale slowly through your nose for a count of **four**, letting your belly rise gently.

4. Hold

Pause and hold your breath for a count of **four**.

5. Breathe Out

Exhale gently through your mouth for a count of **six**, letting go of tension.

5. Breathe Out

Try this for **5–10 cycles**, or until you feel more at ease.



Supportive Tips

You can whisper a calming word or phrase like "peace" or "I'm safe" as you breathe. This works beautifully as a morning or bedtime reset. Try it twice a day to support ongoing nervous system regulation.

FACIAL CONTOURING EXERCISE

Loosen up your face – and your feelings.

WHY IT HELPS

Deep breathing helps activate your vagus nerve, a key part of your nervous system that signals your body it's safe to relax.

By breathing slowly and deeply, you can naturally **lower your heart rate**, **calm your thoughts**, and shift into a more restful, balanced state.

TRY THIS SIMPLE PRACTICE

1. Get Comfy

Try This Simple Practice

Sit or stand somewhere quiet. Let your shoulders soften.

2. Warm Your Hands

Rub your palms together to create a little warmth.

3. Touch Gently

Place your hands on your cheeks or forehead and feel the warmth.

4. Play with Expression

Smile, stretch your mouth, squint, raise your brows – gently. Let your face move freely.

5. Pause and Notice

Check in with how your body feels as you do this.

6. Repeat

Make faces, massage your jaw, or try different expressions – just for a moment of release.



Why It Works

Touch and movement in the face activate calming nerves connected to emotional regulation. This light activity helps release tension and invites a sense of safety and softness – from the inside out.

TONGUE RELEASE EXERCISES

A surprisingly simple way to calm your nervous system.

WHY IT HELPS

The back of your throat is home to part of the vagus nerve – a key player in helping your body feel calm and safe.

Gentle tongue movements can stimulate this nerve and help your body shift into a more relaxed, steady state.

TRY THESE EASY STEPS:

1. Throat Stretch

Try These Easy Steps Open your mouth gently, like you're holding a soft, warm marshmallow on your tongue. This stretches the throat and begins to calm your nervous system.

2. Mouth Exploration

With lips closed, move your tongue slowly around the inside of your mouth. This activates cranial nerves connected to calm and emotional balance.

3. Tongue Circles

Make slow circles with your tongue – around your lips, your teeth, or the roof of your mouth. Feel your jaw and neck soften.

4. Tongue Extension

Stick out your tongue and gently move it side to side, up and down. This movement directly supports vagus nerve activation for a soothing effect.

Helpful Tip: Try pairing this with a few deep breaths or a gentle stretch. Even one or two minutes can bring a sense of reset and release.

BUTTERFLY HUG

A simple, soothing way to feel grounded and calm.

WHY IT HELPS

The Butterfly Hug helps your body feel safe and steady. By gently tapping both sides of your chest in a rhythm, you activate calming pathways in your nervous system. It's like giving yourself a hug – and telling your brain, "It's okay. I'm safe now."

HOW TO TRY IT:

1. Find a Calm Spot

Sit comfortably in a quiet place where you feel safe.

2. Take a Deep Breath

Close your eyes or soften your gaze. Let your breath slow and steady.

3. Cross Your Arms

Place each hand under the opposite collarbone – your thumbs can rest just under your chin. Your arms will look like soft butterfly wings.

4. Start the Taps

Gently tap your chest – left, right, left, right – in a slow, steady rhythm. Keep breathing as you do this.

5. Pause and Notice

After a few taps, stop and notice how you feel. You can do another round if it helps you feel more calm and steady.

A Gentle Reminder: This is a beautiful tool to use when emotions feel big, or when your body needs extra reassurance. Even one round of Butterfly Hug can help you feel more grounded.

THE POWER OF HUGGING

A warm hug is more than just comfort – it's healing.

WHY HUGS HELP

Hugs aren't just about connection, they activate the vagus nerve, which plays a big role in calming your body and mind. Here's how:



STRESS RELIEF

A long, caring hug helps your body release oxytocin – the "love hormone." This creates feelings of safety, joy, and emotional warmth, helping reduce tension and overwhelm.

IMMUNE SUPPORT

When your body feels safe, it relaxes. Less stress means your immune system can work better – helping you stay healthy and bounce back more easily when you're under pressure.

MUSCLE & NERVE RELAXATION

Hugs soothe tight muscles and activate your nervous system's relaxation response. This is partly thanks to the vagus nerve, which helps your body shift into rest-and-repair mode.

SWALLOWING EXERCISES

A small action with a calming effect.

WHY IT HELPS

When we're stressed, our mouths can go dry and swallowing may feel difficult. But when we're calm, swallowing becomes smooth – a sign our body feels safe. This simple exercise uses the vagus nerve – a powerful part of our calming system – to gently bring your body back into balance.

Try This Soothing Practice

1. Try This Soothing Practice

Sit in a quiet space. Let your body relax and allow saliva to gather naturally in your mouth.

2. Gentle Suction

Lightly press your cheeks inward using your tongue or facial muscles, like you're softly creating a little vacuum.

3. Tongue to Roof

Place your tongue gently on the roof of your mouth. Now, slowly swallow.

4. Relax Your Neck

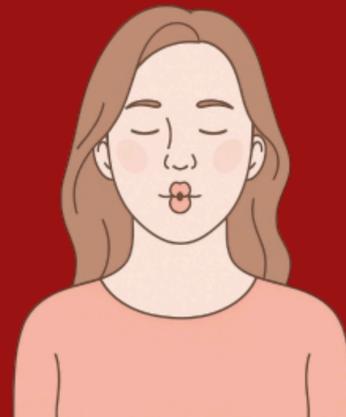
Let your shoulders drop and tuck your chin slightly. Keep your throat soft and relaxed.

5. Notice the Movement

Feel your throat move as you swallow – that gentle motion means your vagus nerve is working.

6. Repeat Slowly

Try up to 10–20 swallows at your own pace. Each one helps your body shift into a calmer, more settled state.



Helpful Tip

These calming vibrations work quietly – like ripples in a pond. Be gentle, take your time, and let your nervous system adjust slowly.

HUMMING & TONING

A soft sound that helps your body feel safe and calm

WHY IT HELPS

Humming makes little vibrations in your body – especially in your chest and throat. These vibrations gently activate the vagus nerve, which helps your nervous system slow down and feel safe. It's like giving your body a calming signal from the inside out.

BEST WAY TO TRY IT

You can hum while sitting or lying down, but lying on your back is extra relaxing. When your body feels supported, the calming effects of humming can go even deeper.

1. Get Cozy

Lie on your back or sit comfortably. Close your eyes if it feels good.

2. Begin to Hum

Let out a soft "Mmm" sound. Notice how it feels in your body – not how it sounds.

3. Keep It Gentle

Continue humming slowly, letting the feeling move through your chest or neck.

4. Play with Sounds

Try different sounds like A, E, I, O, or U and see which feels the most relaxing.

5. Take Your Time

Humming for even 2–5 minutes can help. If you do it longer (up to 7 minutes), pause and breathe afterward – your body keeps relaxing even when you stop.

Helpful Tip

These calming vibrations work quietly – like ripples in a pond. Be gentle, take your time, and let your nervous system adjust slowly.

EYE MASSAGE

A soft, calming touch to help your body slow down.

WHY IT HELPS

When you gently press on your closed eyes, it sends a signal through special nerves (like the vagus nerve) that tell your body it's safe. This can help lower your heart rate and blood pressure – which means your whole system starts to relax. It's like telling your brain, "You're okay. You can rest now."

Try This Soothing Practice

1. Get Comfy

Sit or lie down in a peaceful place.

2. Close Your Eyes

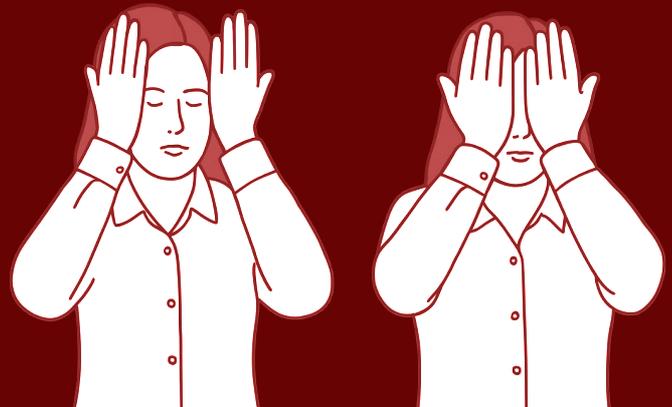
Let your eyelids rest gently shut.

3. Gentle Palm Press

Using your palms, softly press over your closed eyelids – like you're floating a soft balloon in warm water. Don't press hard – it should feel like a gentle hug for your eyes.

4. Stay & Breathe

Hold this gentle pressure for a few slow breaths. Inhale deeply, exhale slowly.



What's Happening?

This simple touch connects to nerves that calm your heart and help your body enter a restful state. It's especially helpful if you feel anxious, overstimulated, or need to slow your thoughts.

FIVE SOOTHING HAND POSITIONS

A simple way to feel calm, safe, and connected.

WHY IT HELPS

- Touch can comfort us – especially our own.
- These hand placements help calm your nervous system by giving your brain a signal of safety.
- Each position supports grounding in a different way – like a soft hug for your body and brain.

TRY THESE CALMING HAND POSITIONS

Gently place both hands on the sides of your head.
Feel supported like a cozy helmet of calm.

Put one hand on your heart and one on your belly.
A comforting combo that connects breath and feelings.

Rest one hand on your forehead and the other behind your head.
Soothing for overthinking and tension.

Place one hand on your forehead and the other over your heart.
Helps settle racing thoughts with compassion.

Hold one hand on your belly (solar plexus) and one at the base of your skull. Great for deep grounding and nervous system reset.



HOW TO USE THIS PRACTICE.

Sit or lie down in a peaceful place.

Take a few slow, deep breaths.

Try holding each hand position for a couple of minutes.

Notice which one feels the most comforting – stay with it longer if you'd like.



You can use just one position for 5–10 minutes when you're feeling anxious or need to reset.

BREATH MEDITATION FOR CALM FOCUS

A gentle way to reset your mind and body.

WHY IT HELPS

Breath is like an anchor—it can bring you back to the present when your mind feels busy or scattered. By focusing on your breath, you can calm your thoughts, feel more peaceful, and build your attention span.

TRY THIS SIMPLE PRACTICE.

FIND A QUIET SPOT

Sit or lie down in a cozy place. Take a few slow, deep breaths.

NOTICE YOUR BREATH

Feel how your chest or belly moves as you breathe in and out. No need to change it—just notice.

STAY WITH YOUR BREATH

When your mind wanders (and it will!), gently bring it back to your breathing.

COUNT IF IT HELPS

You can count your breaths (1, 2, 3...), and restart from 1 if you lose track. That's okay!

PRACTICE A LITTLE EVERY DAY

Try this for 5–15 minutes. Even a few quiet minutes can help you feel more focused and calm.

You can use this practice anytime you feel overwhelmed, distracted, or just want a peaceful pause.

COPING SKILLS YOU CAN TRY ANYTIME

BREATHING

Take slow, deep breaths. Let your belly rise as you breathe in, and gently exhale through your mouth.

VISUALIZATION

Picture a peaceful place—like a quiet beach or a cozy cabin. Let your mind rest there for a few moments.

MUSIC

Play soft, calming music—or something that lifts your spirits.

COMFORT ITEM

Cuddle up with a soft blanket, stuffed animal, or anything that makes you feel safe and held.

MOVEMENT

Stretch, walk, dance, or do light activity to help release built-up energy.

RELAXATION

Take a warm bath, practice gentle yoga, or do a body scan to soften tension.

IMAGERY

Look at calming photos or imagine peaceful scenes in your mind's eye.

INTERACT

Spend time with someone who feels good to be around. Play a game, share a laugh, or just sit together.

AMUSE YOURSELF

Do something fun or distracting: read, color, cook, or try a puzzle.

REFLECT ON SUCCESS

Think about something you've done well. Even small wins matter.

ADDRESS CHALLENGES

Break things down into small, doable steps. What's one thing you could try today?

SPIRITUALITY

Connect with meaning through prayer, meditation, or practices that nourish your soul.

TRIGGERS & COPING STRATEGIES PART 1

When you understand what tends to stress you out and how you can respond with care, you're already taking a big step toward healing.

THIS WORKSHEET HELPS YOU.

- Name common stress triggers in your life.
- Notice how you usually react.
- Explore healthy ways to cope.
- Rate what's actually helpful (and what's not).

TRY THIS REFLECTION.

Think of situations or experiences that often leave you feeling overwhelmed or out of balance. What usually happens? What do you do—or wish you could do—to feel calmer? Rate their effectiveness from 0–10.

EMOTION	YOUR RATING (0–10)
e.g., Conflict with a friend	Deep breathing (7/10), Journaling (8/10)
e.g., Too many tasks at once	To-do list (5/10), Taking a break (8/10)

Tip: Be honest and gentle with yourself—there are no wrong answers here. The goal is to learn what supports you best.

TRIGGERS & COPING STRATEGIES PART 2

Reflect & Strengthen Your Support Tools

Now that you've explored your triggers and responses, take a moment to reflect. These prompts help you notice patterns and strengthen your go-to coping tools.

NOTICING PATTERNS

Are there common situations that tend to overwhelm you? What do they have in common? (Example: Feeling rushed, being around conflict, or not feeling heard).

Write here:

WHAT WORKS BEST?

Which strategies have helped you the most? Are there new ones you'd like to try? (Example: "Deep breathing helps right away." "Maybe I can try music or movement next time.")

Write here:

IN-THE-MOMENT REMINDERS

What can you do to remember these strategies when stress hits?
(Example: A sticky note reminder, a calming mantra, a phone alert,
or keeping a fidget in your bag.)

Write here:

MY SELF-CARE COMMITMENT PLAN

Let's create a simple plan to care for your nervous system with kindness. Choose one small step for each category below that feels realistic and supportive this week.

CATEGORY	MY GENTLE COMMITMENT
Physical Activity: Something that feels good for your body. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What will I do? How often?	
Relaxation Techniques: Choose something that helps you calm or reset. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deep breathing, stretching, journaling...	
Social Connection: Connecting with others in ways that feel safe or joyful. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• One person or small moment of connection this week..	
Nourishment: Support your body with gentle nutrition. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• One goal to nourish yourself this week	
Sleep & Rest: Rest is healing. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• My bedtime goal or rest routine	
Joy & Enjoyment: Choose one thing that lights you up inside. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A hobby, interest, or moment of play	

I commit to these small acts of care - not out of pressure, but because I deserve to feel well, rested, and supported.

Signature: _____

Place this plan somewhere you'll see it - a mirror, journal, or desk - as a gentle reminder to care for yourself.

QUESTION CARDS – AWARENESS

Questions on the Cards:

WHAT IS ONE THING I CAN DO
TODAY TO FEEL MORE
CONNECTED AND ENGAGED
WITH OTHERS?

WHICH RELAXATION TECHNIQUE
CAN I PRACTICE TO ACTIVATE MY
VENTRAL VAGUS AND FEEL
CALMER?

WHAT IS ONE THING I
GENTLY SOOTHE MY NERVOUS
SYSTEM WHEN I NOTICE
SYMPTOMS OF DORSAL
SHUTDOWN? THING I CAN DO
TODAY TO FEEL MORE
CONNECTED AND ENGAGED
WITH OTHERS?

WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE TO FEEL
SAFER AND MORE SECURE IN MY
ENVIRONMENT?

ARE THERE ANY COMFORTING
ACTIVITIES THAT HELP ME
ENGAGE MY PARASYMPATHE
TIC NERVOUS SYSTEM?

WHAT IS ONE SELF-CARE
PRACTICE I CAN COMMIT TO FOR
IMPROVING MY VAGAL TONE
THIS WEEK?



QUESTION CARDS – REFLECTION

Questions on the Cards:

WHEN WAS THE
LAST TIME I FELT A STRONG
EMOTIONAL RESPONSE, AND
WHAT TRIGGERED IT?

HOW DID MY
BODY REACT TO A RECENT
STRESSFUL SITUATION?

CAN I IDENTIFY A RECENT EVENT
WHERE I FELT PARTICULARLY
CONNECTED OR JOYFUL?

WHAT ARE THE SITUATIONS THAT
TYPICALLY MAKE ME FEEL
ANXIOUS OR ON EDGE?

REFLECTING ON THE PAST
WEEK, WHEN DID I FEEL MOST
RELAXED?

HAVE THERE
BEEN MOMENTS WHERE I FELT
DISENGAGED OR DETACHED? WHAT
MIGHT HAVE CAUSED THIS?



QUESTION CARDS – ACTION

Questions on the Cards:

WHAT IS ONE THING I CAN DO
TODAY TO FEEL MORE
CONNECTED AND ENGAGED
WITH OTHERS?

WHICH RELAXATION TECHNIQUE
CAN I PRACTICE TO ACTIVATE MY
VENTRAL VAGUS AND FEEL
CALMER?

WHAT IS ONE THING CAN I
GENTLY SOOTHE MY NERVOUS
SYSTEM WHEN I NOTICE
SYMPTOMS OF DORSAL
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