

Vagus Nerve Stimulation

Exercises to regulate your nervous system

Your vagus nerve is the longest nerve in your body — running from brain to gut, it is the master switch of your parasympathetic nervous system. Stimulating it signals safety to your entire body.

WHY THIS MATTERS

When you're anxious, overwhelmed, or shutting down, your nervous system is in a threat state. Vagus nerve stimulation is one of the fastest, most evidence-based ways to move from threat back into safety — without needing to think your way there.

- Reduces anxiety and stress hormones (cortisol)
- Improves emotional regulation and heart rate variability
- Supports digestion, sleep, and immune function
- Creates the physiological state of safety that makes deeper inner work possible

THE EXERCISES

1. Diaphragmatic Breathing (4-7-8)

Inhale for 4 counts, hold for 7, exhale slowly for 8. The long exhale activates the vagus nerve directly. Repeat 4 cycles. Use before sessions, before sleep, or whenever you feel activated.

2. Humming or Chanting

Hum any note for 3–5 minutes. The vibration stimulates the vagus nerve through the throat. You can hum a favourite song or a single note. Do this in the shower if you feel self-conscious.

3. Cold Water Exposure

Splash cold water on your face for 30–60 seconds, or end your shower with 30 seconds of cold. This triggers the dive reflex — an immediate vagal response that slows your heart rate.

4. Gargling

Gargle vigorously with water for 60 seconds. The muscles at the back of the throat are directly connected to the vagus nerve. Morning and evening.

5. Slow Extended Exhale

Simply exhale twice as long as you inhale. In for 4, out for 8. No holding. The most portable regulation tool you have

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— do it anywhere.

6. Singing

Singing activates the same throat muscles as gargling. Sing loudly in the car, to music you love. Five minutes has a measurable effect on vagal tone.

7. Self-Hold

Cross your arms across your chest and give yourself a slow, firm squeeze. Hold for 30 seconds. Activates touch receptors connected to the vagus nerve.

8. Orienting with Soft Eyes

Spend 2–3 minutes slowly looking around the room with genuine curiosity — colours, shapes, light and shadow. The social engagement system (connected to the vagus) activates through the eyes.

WHEN TO USE THESE

- Before any inner work, journaling, or coaching session
- When you feel anxious, shut down, or overwhelmed
- When you can't sleep and your thoughts are racing
- After a difficult conversation or triggering experience

The goal is not to never feel activated — it's to know how to come back.