



6 Somatic Exercises for Nervous System Regulation

Release what your body is holding

When your body experiences stress or threat, it prepares you to survive - tensing your muscles, quickening your breath, flooding you with adrenaline. This is your stress cycle beginning. The problem is, the stress cycle needs to finish.

Animals complete it naturally by running, fighting, or shaking. But as humans, we override it. We hold it together, push the feeling down, and carry on - and the stress stays locked in the body, unresolved.

Over time, unfinished stress cycles accumulate. This is how trauma forms - not always from one big event, but from smaller ones that never fully moved through. The body begins to hold tension, hypervigilance, or exhaustion as its new normal.



Somatic exercises give your body permission to complete what it started. They work beneath the thinking brain — through movement, sensation, and breath — to release what has been held.

Where vagal toning helps you feel safer in the moment, somatic work goes deeper. This is where longer term healing begins.

Your body has been keeping score. These exercises help it finally put the pen down.





1

Bilateral Stimulation

- Butterfly hug - cross your arms over your chest and tap your shoulders alternately, slowly and rhythmically
- Bilateral tapping - tap alternate knees with your hands
- Walking - slow, deliberate walking where you notice each foot making contact with the ground

TIP: Pair these with deep breathing. The rhythm is what matters, not the speed.

2

Shaking and Tremoring

- Stand and gently shake out your hands, arms, then your whole body
- Allow natural tremoring - if your legs or hands begin to shake, let them rather than stopping it
- Bounce lightly on your heels

TIP: Animals shake after a threat to discharge stress. We're meant to do the same.



3 *Grounding*

- Feel your feet flat on the floor and press down slowly
- Hold something cold, warm, or textured and describe it out loud
- 5-4-3-2-1 - name 5 things you can see, 4 you can touch, 3 you can hear, 2 you can smell, 1 you can taste

TIP: Grounding brings you back into your body and out of the memory or thought loop.

4 *Orienting*

- Slowly turn your head and let your eyes move around the room without rushing
- Notice what feels neutral or safe in your environment
- Name what you see quietly to yourself

TIP: This is what animals do after danger passes - they look around to confirm they're safe. You can do the same.



5 *Visualisation*

- Close your eyes and imagine a place - real or imagined - where you feel completely safe
- Notice what you can see, hear, and feel there
- Place one hand on your heart and breathe slowly as you stay in that place for a few minutes

TIP: The more detail you build into your safe place over time, the easier it becomes to access when you need it.





6

Hip Release

- Yoga's butterfly pose - sit with the soles of your feet together, let your knees fall open, and breathe slowly into your hips
- Supported bridge - lie on your back, feet flat, and slowly lift and lower your hips
- Hip circles - standing, hands on hips, slow gentle circles in both directions
- Pigeon pose (or supine pigeon lying on your back) - hold for at least 2 minutes per side and breathe into any sensation

TIP: Emotions may surface during hip release or especially sadness or unexpected waves of feeling. This is normal. The body is releasing something it has been holding. Let it move through rather than shutting it down.