



6 Vagal Toning Exercises for Nervous System Regulation

Feel Safer, Faster

The vagus nerve runs from your brain through your entire body. Sometimes called the "calming nerve," its job is to help you feel safe.

When your brain senses a threat, the vagus nerve disengages and instinct takes over - this is your threat response, showing up as fight, flight, freeze, or fawn. All four are nervous system dysregulation.

To come back to calm, we have to work with the body first. The thinking brain has gone offline, and you can't think your way back - you have to feel your way there.

Here are five physical ways to re-engage your vagus nerve when you notice you're dysregulated.



1 *Breathing*

- Slow extended exhales - Breathing in through the nose for 4, one sharp inhale and exhale slowly out of the mouth and out through the mouth.
- Box breathing - Breath in for 4, hold for 4, out for 4 and repeat.



2 *Sound and Vibration*

- Humming, chanting, or om-ing
- Gargling with water
- Singing (especially sustained notes)



3

Cold Exposure

- Splashing cold water on your face
- Cold shower (even just 30 seconds)



4

Movement

- Gentle neck stretches and slow head rolls
- TIP: Look around the room while you do this, name out loud things that you see that bring you joy, e.g. sky, books, blankets
- Shaking - stand up and shake your whole body
- Swinging



5

Social and Connection

- Eye contact and warm conversation - TIP: grab your safe person and tell them that's what you need
- Laughter - TIP: Put on your safe TV show that makes you laugh
- Being held or giving/receiving a long hug - TIP: if there is no one around, wrap your own arms around you

6

Body Based

- Placing a hand on your heart and breathing slowly
- Ear massage (the vagus nerve runs near the ear canal)
- Yawning (real or even faked - it triggers a genuine response)

