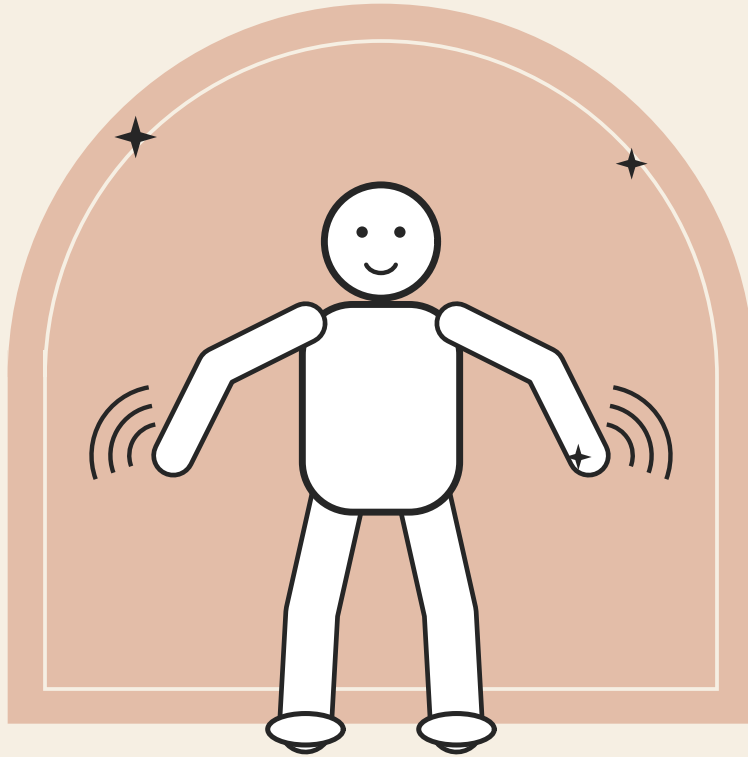




A GENTLE GUIDE

6 Somatic Exercises for Nervous System Regulation

Release what your body is holding

THE MINDFUL MUM PDA

Why start with the body?

When your body senses stress or threat, it gets ready to protect you: your muscles tense, your breathing quickens and adrenaline rises. This is your stress response, and it's meant to be temporary.

Many animals finish this cycle naturally by running, shaking or fighting. As humans, we often can't. We hold it together, push the feeling down and carry on, and the tension can stay in the body long after the moment has passed.

When stress keeps building without a chance to settle, many people find their body starts to treat tension, being on high alert or exhaustion as normal. This is especially common for parents who are always on call.

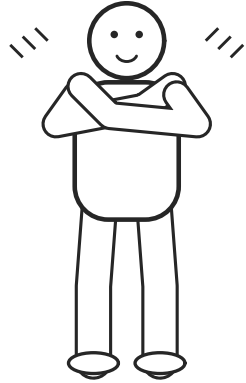
Somatic exercises work through movement, sensation and breath, rather than through thinking. They give your body a chance to finish what it started, and they're a gentle way to start feeling safer in your body.

Vagal toning exercises can help you feel calmer in the moment. Somatic exercises are a slower practice that many people find helps them release what they've been carrying. Your body has been holding a lot. These exercises give it a chance to put some of it down.

How to use this guide

- Choose one exercise, not all six. Small and regular is better than big and rare.
- Go slowly. There's no right way to do these, and nothing to get wrong.
- Stop if anything feels uncomfortable, painful or like too much.

1 Bilateral Stimulation

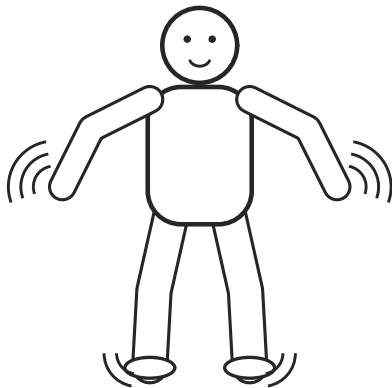


- Butterfly hug: cross your arms over your chest and tap your shoulders one after the other, slowly and rhythmically.
- Knee tapping: tap your knees alternately with your hands.
- Mindful walking: walk slowly and notice each foot touching the ground.

TIP

Pair these with slow breathing. The rhythm matters more than the speed.

2 Shaking and Tremoring

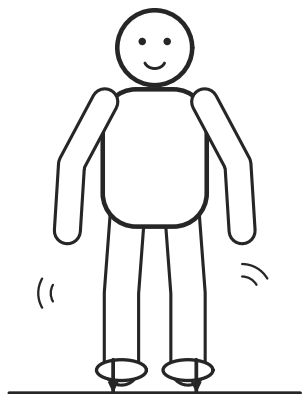


- Stand and gently shake out your hands, then your arms, then your whole body.
- If your hands or legs begin to tremble on their own, let them, rather than stopping it.
- Bounce lightly on your heels.

TIP

Many animals shake after a scare. Some people find it helps them release tension too.

3 Grounding

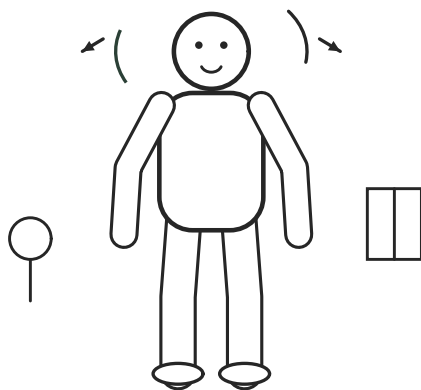


- Feel your feet flat on the floor and press down slowly.
- Hold something cold, warm or textured and describe it out loud.
- 5-4-3-2-1: name 5 things you can see, 4 you can touch, 3 you can hear, 2 you can smell and 1 you can taste.

TIP

Grounding brings you back into your body and out of a thought loop.

4 Orienting



- Slowly turn your head and let your eyes move around the room without rushing.
- Notice anything that feels neutral or safe.
- Quietly name what you see.

TIP

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

5 Visualisation

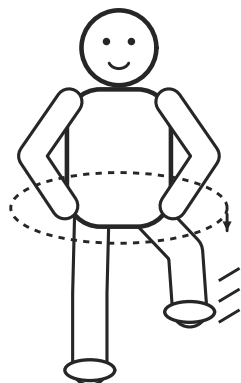


- Close your eyes and picture a place, real or imagined, where you feel completely safe.
- Notice what you can see, hear and feel there.
- Place one hand on your heart and breathe slowly, staying in that place for a few minutes.

TIP

The more detail you add to your safe place over time, the easier it becomes to picture when you need it.

6 Hip Release



- Butterfly pose: sit with the soles of your feet together, let your knees fall open and breathe slowly into your hips.
- Bridge: lie on your back with your feet flat and slowly lift and lower your hips.
- Hip circles: stand with your hands on your hips and make slow, gentle circles in both directions.
- Pigeon pose (or lying-down pigeon): hold for a minute or two each side, breathing into any sensation. Come out of it if it hurts.

TIP

Emotions can sometimes come up during hip release, such as sadness or an unexpected wave of feeling. That's okay. Let it move through, and stop if it feels like too much.

Which will you try today?

Pick one. Notice how it feels. You don't have to do them all, and you don't have to get it right.

☐ **Bilateral stimulation**

How it felt: _____

☐ **Shaking and tremoring**

How it felt: _____

☐ **Grounding**

How it felt: _____

☐ **Orienting**

How it felt: _____

☐ **Visualisation**

How it felt: _____

☐ **Hip release**

How it felt: _____

A gentle note

These are gentle exercises, not medical treatment. Please stop any exercise that feels uncomfortable or makes you feel worse, and go at your own pace. If strong feelings come up and feel hard to manage, speak to your GP or a therapist. If you're struggling or have thoughts of harming yourself, call Samaritans on 116 123 (UK), call or text 988 (US), or call 999 (UK) or 911 (US) in an emergency.