



Find Peace:

4 Ways to Soothe the Nervous
System



1 Rigorous Exercise

Exercise that gets the heart rate accelerated provides a ton of immediate benefits, including enhanced mood, diminished anxiety and greater focus.

When we feel stressed, anxious or intensely angry, our nervous system is likely in fight or flight mode, meaning it is mobilized to take survival action. All of our autonomic (automatic) body functions happen at a more rapid rate (breathing, heart rate, digestion).

Why not work with that natural boost of energy by engaging in 5 - 20 minutes of a rigorous exercise that's safe for you?

Ideas include going for a bike ride, run, or brisk walk, doing burpees, jumping jacks, swinging, swimming, jumping on a trampoline, doing crabwalks and more.

2

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation can help us move physically and emotionally from a state of tension to a state of relaxation. It works by leaning into tension and enhancing it by first tensing muscles and then allowing them to be loose. You can skip over any muscles that are injured or which a medical provider has asked you to rest.

Find a comfortable place to sit, lie or stand.

Take two deep breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth.

Tighten the muscles of your feet, calves, thighs and glutes. Flex all of the leg and feet muscles for a moment.

Next, let your legs and feet relax. Picture the tension melting from the hips, down through the thighs, through the knees, calves, ankles, and exiting through the feet.

Take two more deep breaths in and out.

Now clench the core, back, chest and shoulders as tightly as possible.

Then let them be loose and easy. Picture the tension emanating out from your core into the space around you.

Take two deep breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth.

Next make fists of the hands and forearms, biceps, triceps and shoulders.

Then let the arms and hands relax and be soft and loose.

Take two more deep breaths in and out.

Lastly, tense the neck, face and scalp. Try not to worry about making any funny faces.

Then let them relax. Roll your neck to stretch it a few times by tucking chin to chest, rolling the head over one shoulder, over the back and over the other shoulder.

Finally, take two last deep breaths: in through the nose, out through the mouth.



3

Deep Breathing with Intention



Deep breathing is extraordinarily beneficial. It's free and available at any time. When we breathe deeply, we initiate a deceleration of our body's autonomic functioning. Once the breathing becomes slow and deep, the heart rate and digestion also slow down, helping us to feel calm.

Consider an emotion you would like to feel less of. Call to mind another emotion you would like to feel more of. Name these emotions with one word each.

For example, you may want to feel more, 'Peace,' and less, 'Stress'.

Place one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen. With normal breathing, you will likely notice the hand on your chest rise and fall. Breathing in slowly and deeply, pulling the air down into the bottom of the lungs, notice how the hand on your abdomen also rises and falls.

Breathe in deeply and slowly through the nose, pulling the air deep into the

lungs, while thinking the first word you chose, such as, 'Peace.'

Exhale thoroughly through the mouth, expelling all the air in the lungs while thinking the second word you chose, like, 'Stress.'

With each inhale, imagine you are breathing in and inviting a sense of Peace through your nose.

With each exhale, imagine you are breathing out and releasing a sense of Stress through the mouth.

Take as many deep breaths as needed. I often do 5 – 20 myself or together with my clients.

4 Vergence



Vergence is a strategy that comes from Brainspotting. It works with the three muscles that attach to either side of each eye. These muscles connect deeply into the brain and activate the parasympathetic nervous system (this tells all autonomic body functions to slow down). When you try it, you may actually feel your heart rate begin to slow.

First, look at a far point in the distance. This may be the far end of a room, something outside a window, or something far from you if you are outdoors. It's good for this far point to be 10 or more feet away from you.

Next, raise your finger, pencil or other object a little less than arm's length from you. You might extend your arm about 75% of its full length.

If you have one, set a timer for 2 minutes (if you don't have a timer, you can simply count until you arrive at 15 shifts of focus).

Begin by looking at the far point and counting to 7 or 8.

Next switch to looking at the near point and counting to 7 or 8 again.

Continue to shift your focus between near and far like this until the timer goes off, or if you don't have a timer, until you've shifted your focus 15 times.



Rachel Chavez, LCSW, PPS – Offering therapy, supervision & psychological evaluations for humans seeking healing, connection and freedom



rachelchavezlcsw.net