

# Supporting the Nervous System

CCDP Social Workers Kym & Laura

*We acknowledge with gratitude, that we are gathered on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), and sə́lílwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh Nation) First Nations who have nurtured and cared for the lands and waters around us for all time. We give thanks for the opportunity to live, work and support care here.*



Provincial Health  
Services Authority



- Webinar guidelines
- Understanding the role of the nervous system
- Window of Tolerance
- Strategies to Support the Nervous System
- Q&A

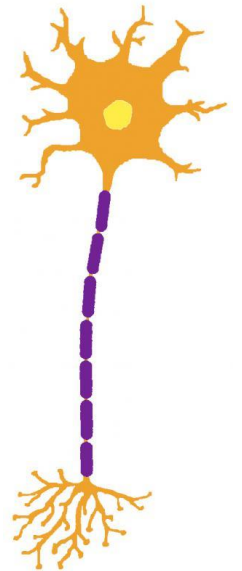
# Webinar details

- 90 mins, 5 min break, webinar format
- Look after your comfort
- Zoom features: camera, mute, chat, Q&A box
- Please respect confidentiality
- Those who support you are welcome to participate with you
- Not being recorded, slides are available\*



# The Nervous System

- Is your body's command & communication centre
- Has 3 main parts: brain, spinal cord and nerves
- Uses system of nerves to send messages back and forth between the brain and the body.



# Autonomic Nervous System

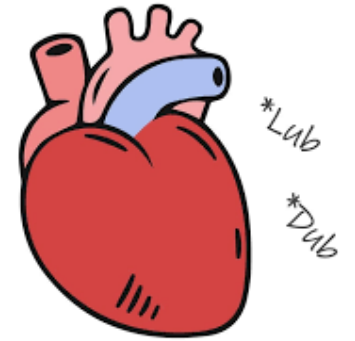
- connects your brain to most of your internal organs and controls bodily functions that we need to survive (ex: breathing, heart rate, digestion, body temperature, etc)
- Made up of two different branches



**Sympathetic**



**Parasympathetic**



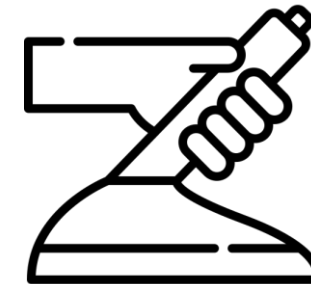
# Sympathetic

- Prepares the body for quick action
- “Flight or flight”
- Temporary state, activated only when needed



# Parasympathetic

- Slows the body down and returns it to base line
- “Rest, digest, connect”
- Ideal state to remain in



Both are important in the body's stress response and recovery, and together they work to keep the body in balance.





# How the Gas Pedal Gets Stuck

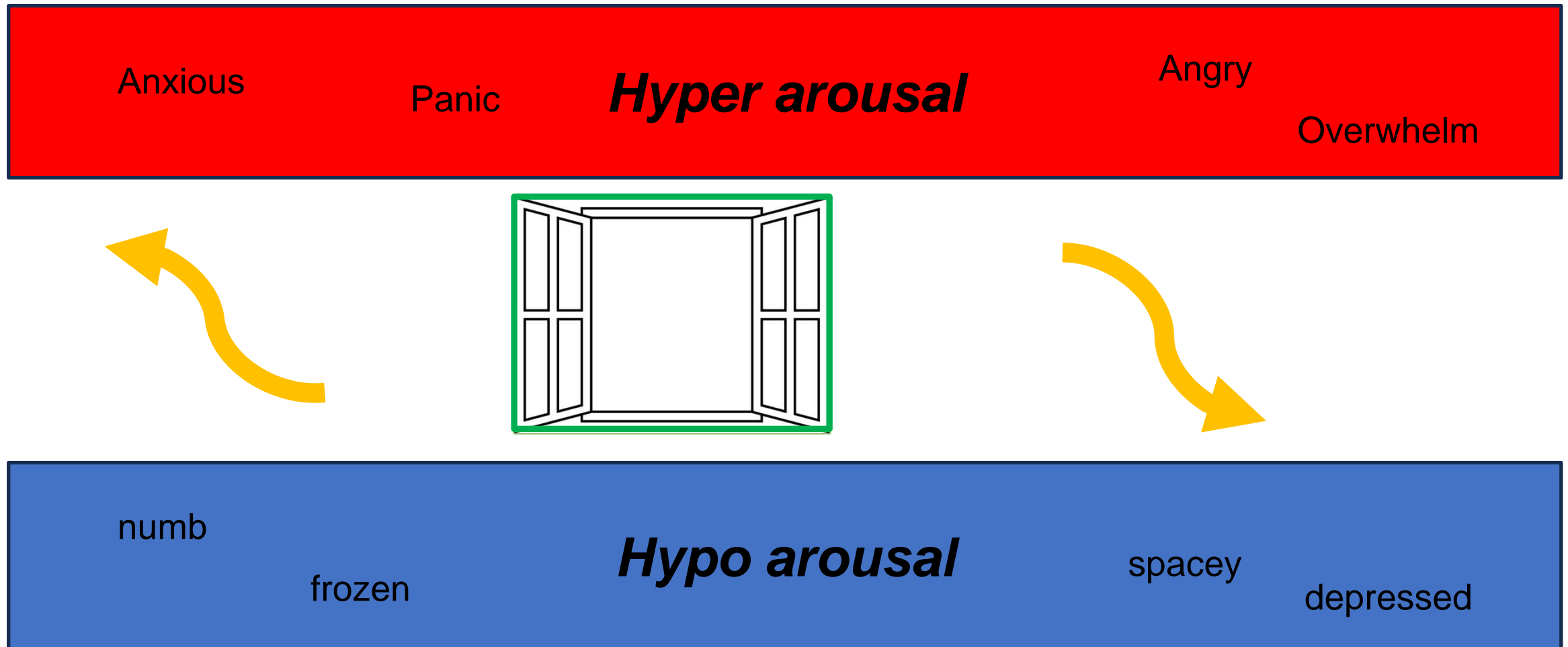




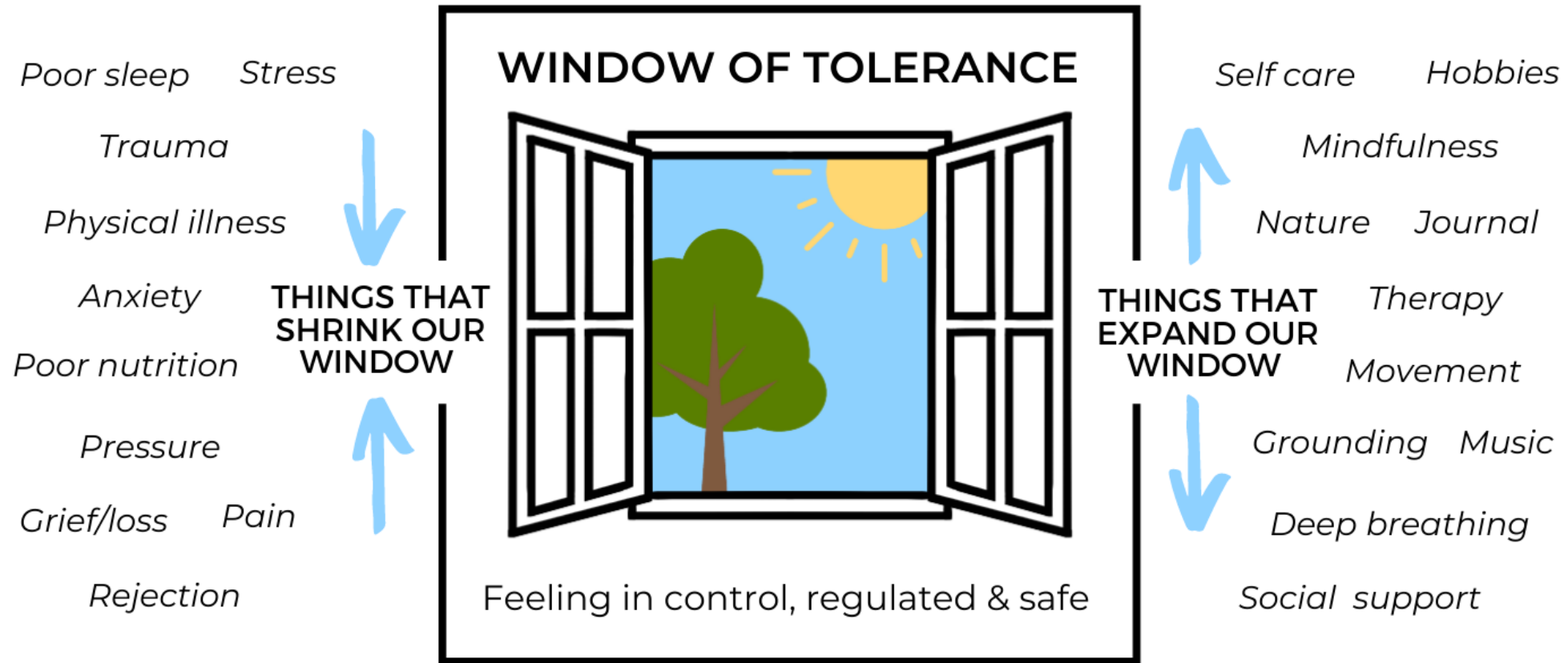
# Working with our Nervous System



# Window of Tolerance



# Ways to change our Window of Tolerance





# Where am I?



- Even asking yourself “Am I in or out of my window?” is a helpful question and can widen or stretch our window. You can look back on your day and reflect when you were inside or outside
- And when you were outside, looking at those times with compassion. Knowing that this was a habit mode, operating on automatic

# We are using tools to:

1. Shift our focus away from the difficulty
2. Bring our attention to what feels safe or stabilizing.
3. Give our nervous system new input

You instinctually already know many ways to do this! We are just bringing them more to our conscious awareness so we can strengthen them



*“The shoe that fits one person pinches another; there is no recipe for living that suits all cases.”*

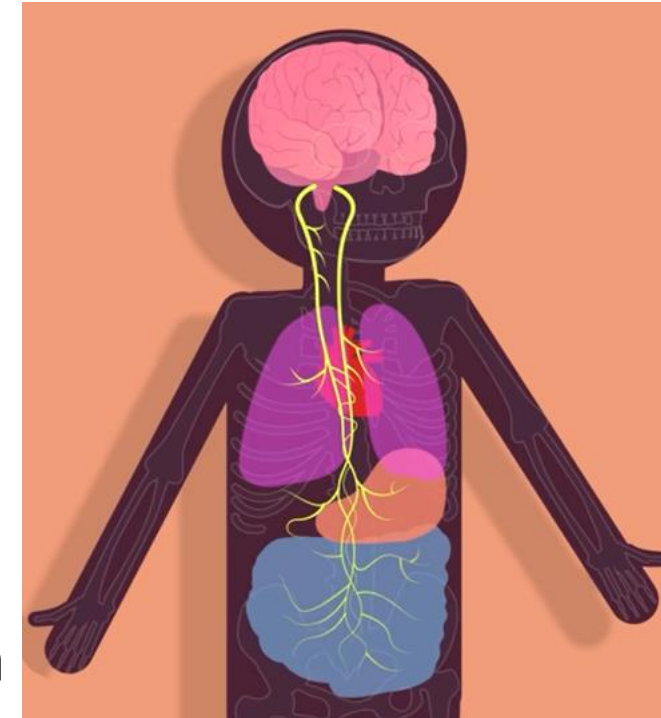
(Jung, 1993:21)





# Vagus Nerve

- controls the parasympathetic nervous system (rest & digest)
- down-regulates the response to stress and threats
- research shows that vagus nerve stimulation can aid in stress reduction and boost mental health (Cleveland Clinic)



# Music

- Listening or creating/playing music
- Humming
- Singing
- Gargling

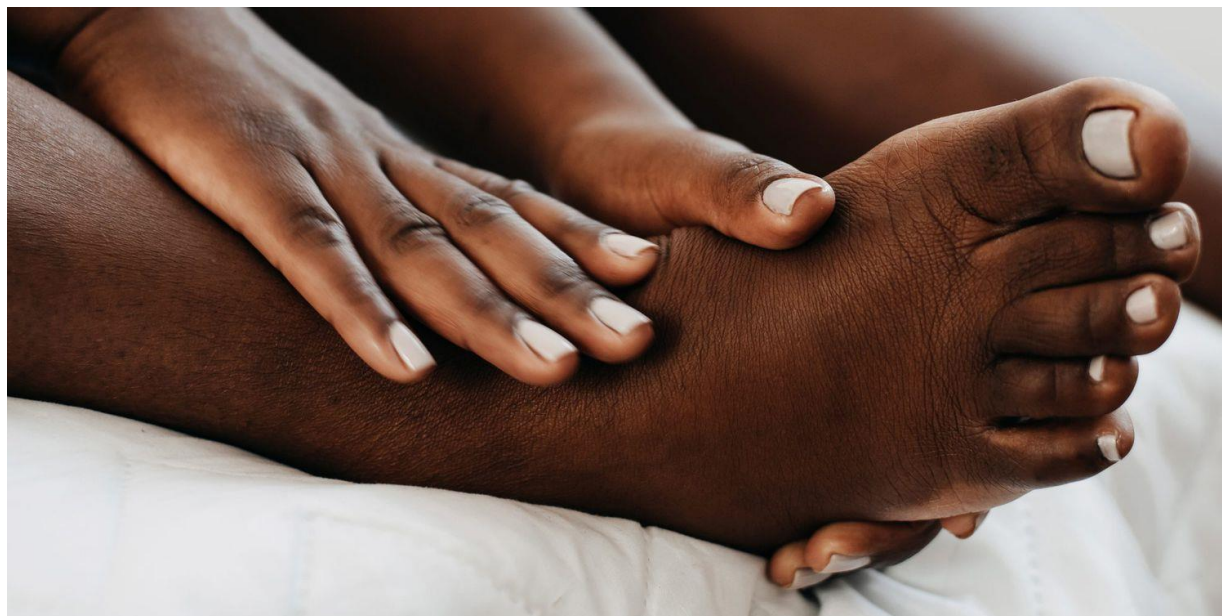


# Voo Breath

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DeB\\_CGtOJM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DeB_CGtOJM)



# Self Foot Massage



# Butterfly Hug

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGGJrqscvtU>



# Sense of Touch: 3 exercises

1) Rub hands together, place them on a place of tension in the body. Don't need to shift or change anything. As you breathe, just allow the hand to be there. Your nervous system is taking in the information



2) Massage your temples or scalp if you like. Rub your cheeks or face, touch back of your neck and head. Slow, broad strokes down your arms and legs.

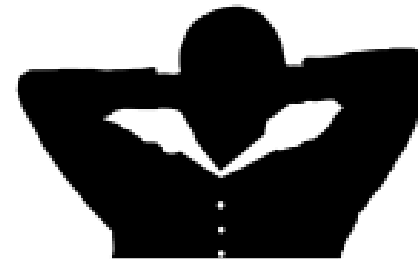
3) Self care Pose





# Deep Breathing

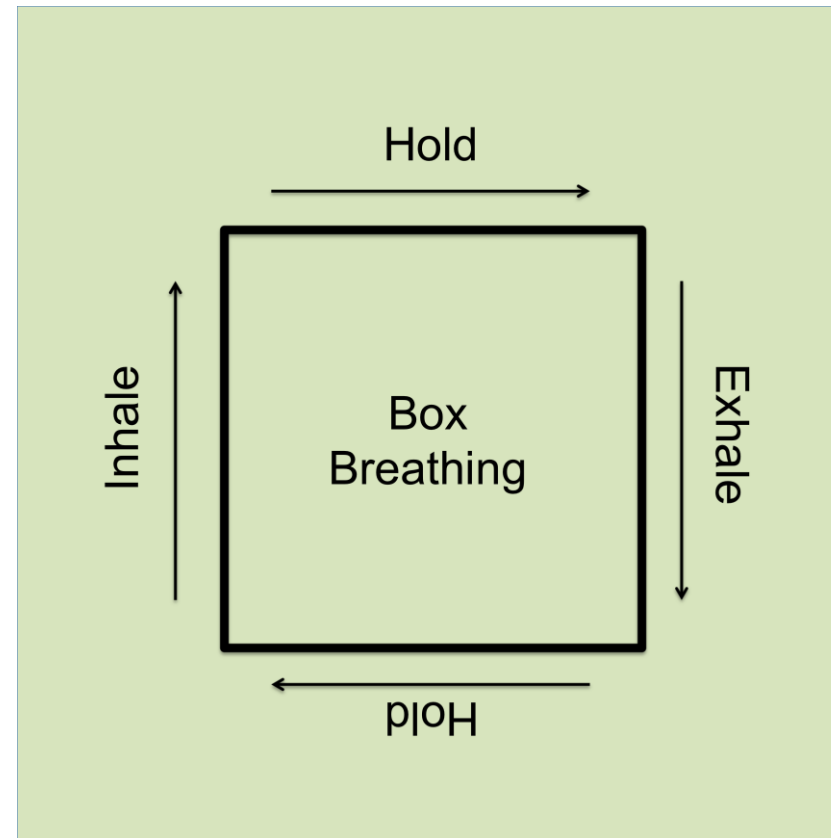
- Hot chocolate breathing
- Hands behind head
- Physiological Sigh
- Longer exhale





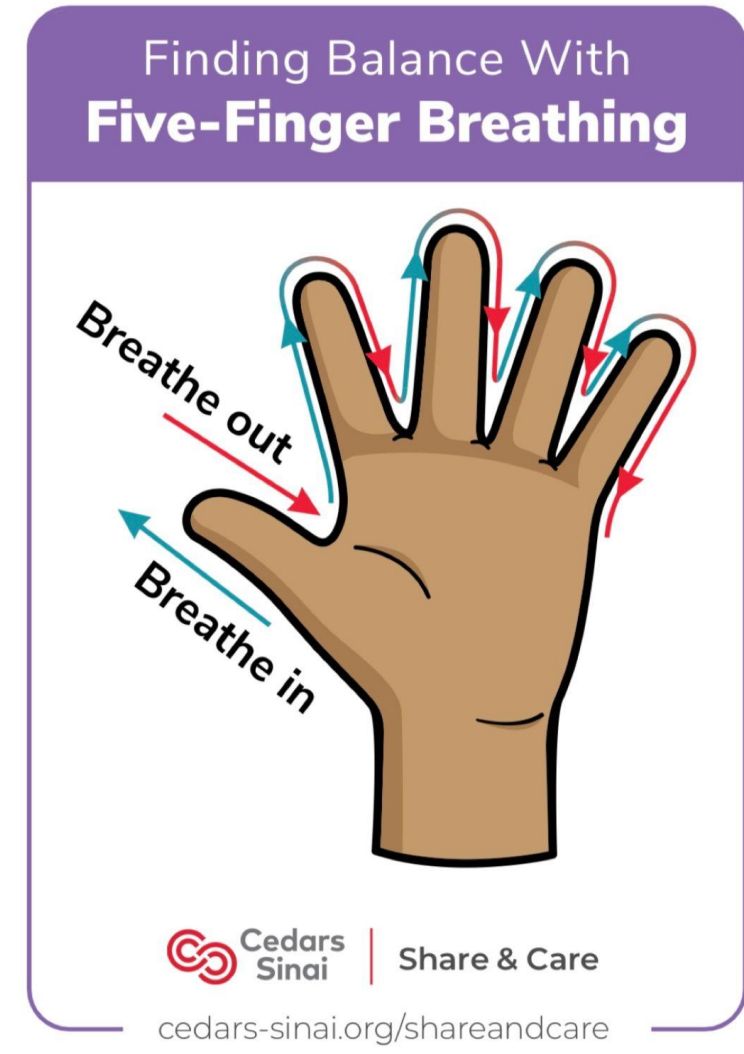
# Square Breathing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tEmt1Znux58>



# 5 Finger Breathing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5QVqMaWrP-s>



# Feel Your Feet

- Take a moment to focus on your feet. What do your feet feel like right now?
- Are they warm, cool, sweaty, tingling or dry? Does one foot feel different than the other

# Savour and Linger



# Self Compassion

- Gives us cues of safety and connection
- Helps disengage the fight or flight
- Uses gentle vocalization or soothing touch

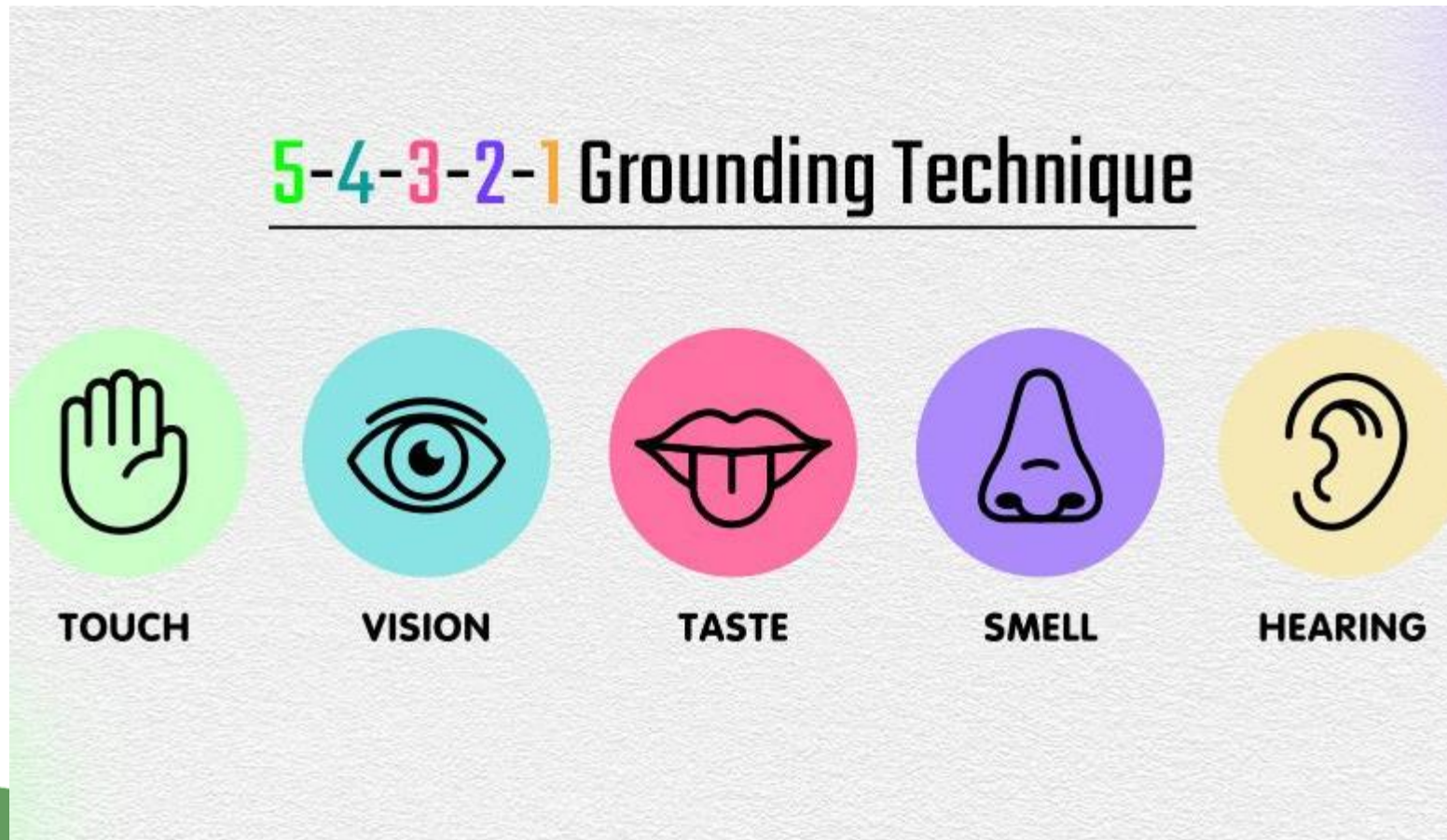


# Self-Compassion can include things like...

- Telling yourself that it's ok to pace yourself and take rest when you need to.
- Setting a boundary, so that you can take care of yourself.
- Taking a deep breath, and saying something kind to yourself when strong emotions arise.

# 5 Anchor Grounding

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30VMIEmA114>



# MORE Ways to Soothe the Nervous System

- Essential oils
- Gentle stretching, yoga, meditation, qi gong\*
- Cold compress on your neck or chest\*
- Seeking out supportive connection with others\*
- Journalling
- Being in nature
- Drumming





- Arts and crafts or other hobbies
- Seeking opportunities to laugh, such as watching a funny video or podcast
- Bonding with a pet
- Visualization
- Meditation
- Body scans
- Progressive muscle relaxation



- Practice in times of relative “calm”
- Have a list of 4-5 options that you have tried and find effective
- Try and build this into your daily schedule (ex: breathing exercise before you get out of bed, feel your feet mid day, foot massage at bed)
- Can “layer” different techniques (ex: music and touch)

# Resources

## Books with Mindfulness or Breathwork Exercises

“Unshakeable,” Jo-Ann Rosen

“Freedom from Pain,” Peter Levin & Maggie Philips

“Outsmart Your Pain: Mindfulness and Self-Compassion to Help You Leave Chronic Pain Behind,” Christiane Wolf

“You Are Not Your Pain: Using Mindfulness to Relieve Pain, Reduce Stress, and Restore Well-Being,” Vidyamala Burch & Danny Penman

## Websites:

[Self Compassion Practices](#)

[Self Compassion Worksheets](#)

[Gentle Movement at Home](#) (free videos for people with pain and chronic illness taught by BC physical therapists)

[Adapted Yoga for people with Chronic Illness](#) (yoga and breathwork with teacher who has ME. Some free videos and paid classes)

[Anxiety Canada](#) (information, CBT based groups, apps)

Bounce

[Meditating with Beginner's Mind](#) (short video)

# Resources

## Websites:

Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre Collection of short, [free guided meditations](#) and other resources from BC Children's Hospital Centre for Mindfulness

[Pain BC](#) Social Support Groups

[ME FM Society of BC](#) Social Support Groups

# Meditation Apps

- UCLA Mindful (free, straightforward app with short meditations. Great app for beginners)
- Insight Timer (app with extensive amount of free content, some paid features)
- Smiling Mind (free app)
- Breathr (free app for youth and adults, developed by Kelty Mental Health & BC Children's Hospital Centre for Mindfulness)
- Healthy Minds (free app)
- Headspace (paid app with free trial)
- Calm (paid app with free trial)
- Balance (free for one year)

# In the case of an emergency...

- BC Crisis Line: 310-6789 (any where in BC)
- 9-8-8 (any where in Canada): call or text if you are having thoughts of suicide

# Remember...

Progress



what people think  
it looks like

Progress



what it really  
looks like

# Questions and Comments?

