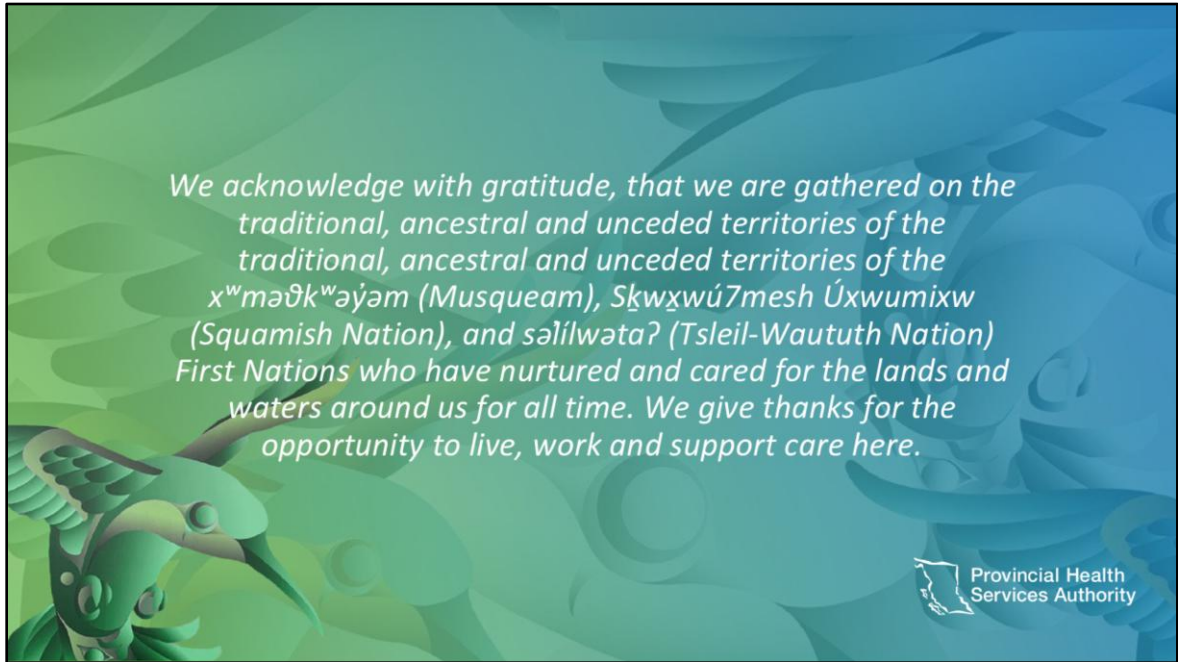


Supporting the Nervous System

CCDP Social Workers Kym & Laura



Invite people to use the chat if they would like to share where they are calling in from



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

Webinar details

- 90 mins, 5 min break, webinar format
- Look after your comfort
- Q&A box (questions at the end)
- Please respect confidentiality
- Those who support you are welcome to participate
- Not being recorded, slides are available*



Will not go over all the slides together today, but you'll have access to them and the exercises

Gentle Reminder

- This session is for educational and informational purposes only
- Check with your health care provider before starting any new practices to see if they are right for you
- Participate in whatever way feels best for you
- Trust your body's cues – you are the expert on your own needs
- This is about finding what feels supportive – and that may look different for everyone

This session is designed to be:

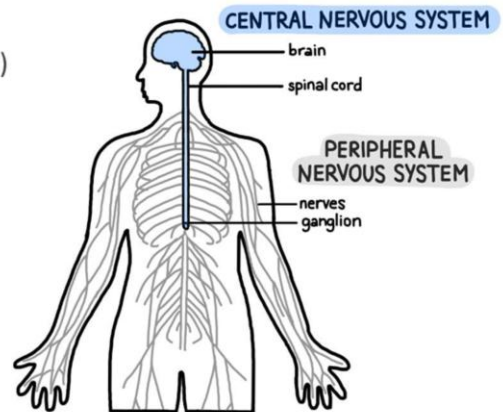
- Gentle and low-energy
- Trauma-informed and choice-based
- Focused on simple, evidence-based tools to support your well-being

You can follow along with practices, or just listen and observe.

I am not a nurse, neuroscientist or Somatic Practitioner, but just someone living with chronic illness myself, exploring these practices

The Nervous System

- 2 main parts: Peripheral Nervous System (PNS) & Central Nervous System (CNS)
- PNS: all the nerves outside of the brain and spine, acts as a messenger system
- CNS: brain and the spinal cord, acts as the control centre



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SPEAKING NOTES:

- 1) We'll begin with a short and general overview of the nervous system. For some, this may be a review; for others, it might be new. Having a basic understanding can be helpful. NS has 2 main divisions.
- 2) PNS gathers information from inside and outside our body- like from our eyes, ears, skin, and internal organs- and sends it to CNS (your brain and spinal cord).
- 3) The CNS processes that information and sends signals back out through the PNS to tell your body what to do-like breathe, move, speak, or digest.

Peripheral divided into Somatic and Automatic. Automatic divided up into SNS, PNS

Our focus: Peripheral nervous system



Somatic: voluntary actions
body like moving and sensing

Autonomic: manages automatic
functions (heart rate, digestion)

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Peripheral nervous system is made up of two branches:

- i) Somatic: conscious movements (also carries sensory information ex: touch, pain, temperature)
- ii) Autonomic: unconscious, bodily processes we don't need to think about doing

Here's a very simple map of the nervous system → these systems continually communicate → our bodies adapt to what's happening inside and around us → we can experiment with giving the system different experiences and information → not to hack it, fix it or force calm, but to develop a different relationship with it.

Sympathetic

- Mobilizes energy and prepares us for action
- Often increases with challenge, exertion or threat
- Sometimes described as the “accelerator”



Parasympathetic

- Supports rest, digestion and restoration
- Helps regulate and conserve energy
- The vagus nerve is a major parasympathetic pathway



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We need both systems. Healthy regulation is not about staying calm. It's about being able to respond and adapt!!

Our autonomic nervous system is continually adjusting to what is happening inside and around us. The sympathetic and parasympathetic systems are both important and work together in everyday life. We sometimes use the accelerator and brake as a simple analogy, but the nervous system is more complex than that. Healthy regulation isn't about staying calm or staying in one branch of the nervous system- it's about flexibility and being able to respond and adapt

Protective Responses:

Fight: Irritable or angry, argue or defend yourself



Flight: anxious, panicky, restless, racing thoughts, wanting to leave



Freeze: feeling numb, disconnected, shame, depression, shut down



Living with chronic illness may mean our responses become more easily activated, or harder to shift.

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SPEAKING NOTES

1) This slide is a closer look at some of the protective responses we mentioned earlier, created by sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system. All of these responses make sense. And the goal isn't to eliminate these responses. They are protective. We can practise noticing them and supporting greater flexibility.

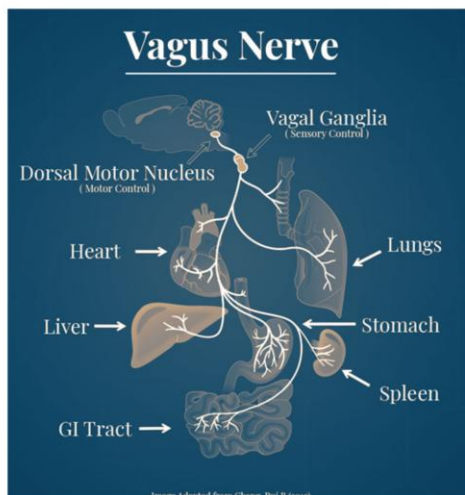
These are common protective responses. They aren't bad or dysfunctional; they are ways the nervous system tries to help us respond to what it perceives as challenge or threat. With chronic illness, these responses can sometimes become easier to trigger or harder to shift

Remember

These responses are automatic —
we don't consciously choose
them



Bullet #2: They are normal protective strategies when the NS detects threat, stress or uncertainty , not signs of weakness or failure.



- A major pathway of the **parasympathetic nervous system**
- Connects the brain with organs including the **heart, lungs and digestive tract**
- Carries information in **both directions** between the brain and body
- Plays an important role in **autonomic regulation**

SPEAKING NOTES

It's the longest cranial nerve, running from the brainstem all the way down to the large intestine. Along the way, it connects the brain to many major organs-especially the heart, lungs, and digestive system-and helps send messages back and forth

You may have heard a lot about the vagus nerve- particularly online, where we sometimes hear about 'vagus nerve hacks.' It is an important nerve, but it isn't a magic switch for calming the body.

The vagus nerve is a major pathway of the parasympathetic nervous system. It travels from the brainstem and communicates with many organs, including the heart, lungs and digestive tract

What's quite interesting is that this communication goes both ways. The brain is sending information to the body, but a great deal of information is also travelling from the body back toward the brain. So the nervous system is continually receiving information about what's happening both inside us and

around us

So rather than thinking about today's practices as ways to *activate our vagus nerve* or *hack our nervous system*, I'd invite us to think of them as different ways of offering the nervous system information and experience- through breath, movement, sensation, vision, touch and attention- and noticing what happens.

Supporting the Nervous System

- Offer the nervous system different kinds of information and experience
- Gently widen our attention beyond what is difficult
- Notice what feels neutral, pleasant, supportive or steadying
- Explore support through the body, our surroundings, and connection with others



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Not forcing a change — creating more possibilities for the nervous system to respond.

We're widening the field so pain/fatigue/difficulty isn't necessarily the *only* information we're receiving. Ex:

Maybe my feet don't feel good, but the sensation of the chair behind my back is neutral. Maybe the sunlight on the wall is pleasant. Maybe hearing someone's voice feels supportive.

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



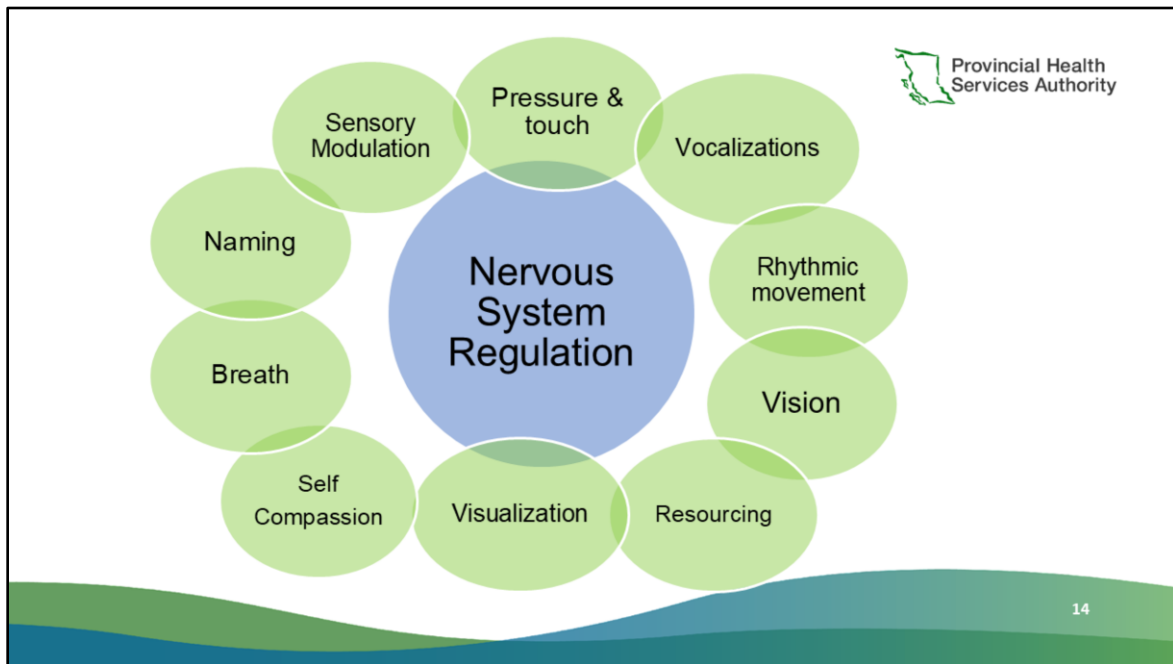
“The shoe that fits one person pinches another; there is no recipe for living that suits all cases.”

(Jung, 1993:21)



SPEAKING NOTES:

- 1) Today is just a chance to **play** and explore some new practices. Some might feel helpful, others not-and that’s totally okay. There’s no expectation here. Try some or none. If something doesn’t feel right, it’s okay to stop. The most important thing is to check in with yourself and notice how it feels.
- 2) We’ll explore a mix of approaches—some based in neuroscience, others from different traditions. Some of these practices have more research behind them than others. This isn’t about promoting one ‘right’ method or expert (somatic or polyvagal etc) It’s an invitation to gently try things out and notice what feels helpful for you.



This is the “how.”

These practices offer different kinds of sensory, attentional, and emotional experiences. We can experiment with them and simply notice how our body responds

Much of this may be things you already do consciously or unconsciously. Today you can use it as a chance to practice & strengthen them, or share them with others.

We’ve listed many practices on in this presentation to offer lots of choice. We won’t have time to go through each one of them today. Instead, the slides are available for you to revisit later- so you can explore what feels right for you, at your own pace. But for now, let’s begin.

Notice and Name

- Labelling can sometimes lessen the emotional charge
- Pause with compassion first, don't jump to a strategy



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- 1) The first thing practice we want to start with might feel basic but is important. Sometimes the most powerful thing we can do when we are feeling dysregulated is simply notice what's happening in our body and mind and name it. "I'm anxious. My heart is beating fast." or "I am sad and my limbs feel heavy." Say this out loud or in your head. Research suggests that putting words to what we're feeling can sometimes reduce emotional intensity and help us relate to the experience with a little more space.
- 2) It's important to pause, and not jump to a strategy right away. Rushing into a fix-it mode can send our body the message that we're not okay or need fixing. Pause to acknowledge—gently and with compassion "Its just the nervous system responding to try and protect me." When we know what's going on and why, we tend to be less judgmental or self-blaming and this can be its own form of regulation.

Visualization & Resourcing



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Resourcing

- Resourcing involves thinking of something pleasant that brings you a sense of calm, strength, or connection
- Uses sensation, emotion, memory, and imagery
- Resourcing is like visualization, with attention to how the experience feels in the body
- Both are supportive practices
- Imagery can influence how we feel in the body.



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Resourcing is a gentle somatic practice that invites us to bring attention to something that feels supportive, steady, or pleasant.

Resourcing is visualizing some thing that helps you to feel better in your body, to help you feel safe. And then you tune in to what emotions or sensations are associated with this. Resourcing It's not just what you picture — **it's how that picture makes your body feel in the moment.** For example visualization is picturing a calm lake. Resourcing is noticing how your breath slows, your shoulders soften, and a sense of calm and safety arises as you imagine or remember sitting by that lake.

What we imagine can create real emotional and bodily responses, which is why imagery can sometimes be supportive (ex: someone talks about ants and you might feel itchy. Or when thinking about an upcoming medical appt our heart rate can increase. But when thinking about a quiet sandy beach, our muscles can soften). So lets' use vivid imagery to our benefit to regulate the body.



Resourcing Script

Bring to mind something that helps you feel more settled or supported. It might be a person, place, animal, memory, object, or an inner quality like courage or kindness. It can be real or imagined.

Let yourself explore any specific details—sights, sounds, sensations, or emotions. Gently observe what feelings or body sensations come up as you focus on it, and where you feel them in your body. Does anything soften, warm, or feel more at ease?

When you're feeling activated, you can return to this resource by vividly recalling it—along with the comforting sensations it brings—to help you feel more grounded and steady.



Small Shifts, Soothing Signals



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Half Smile (Facial Feedback Loop)

- Facial expressions both reflect and influence our emotions
- A very slight change in the muscles of the face may offer the brain different sensory information
- We can experiment with a gentle half-smile and simply notice what happens
- No need to feel happy or make anything change



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A very slight change in the muscles of the face may offer the brain **different sensory information** We can experiment with a gentle half-smile and simply **notice what happens** **No need to feel happy or make anything change**

The facial feedback loop is the idea that our facial expressions don't just reflect our emotions- they also influence them.

Research suggests that facial expressions can have a small influence on emotional experience. We can experiment with a gentle half-smile and simply notice whether anything shifts, without trying to force a particular feeling.
(half smile used in DBT, Somatic therapy etc)

Instructions:

As you smile, imagine your jaw softening and a relaxed feeling spreading across your face, your entire head, and down your shoulders. Notice how the body feels.

Inviting Ease through the Tongue

- Bring your tongue to the bottom of the mouth, gently let it rest there. Notice what happens to the rest of your body.
- Try adding a gentle wiggling of the toes or fingers, allowing the tongue to rest at the bottom of the mouth. Again, see what happens in the body.

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Here's another subtle experience we can offer the body and get curious about.

Some people notice changes in tension, breathing, or ease when they change the position of the tongue. There isn't one response you're supposed to have, so just notice what happens for you

You can try a little experiment and do the opposite: bring your tongue to the roof of your mouth and notice what happens.

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?
- Can you feel the ground under your feet?



22

Sometimes bringing attention to a relatively neutral part of the body can help widen our awareness beyond areas where discomfort or tension is most noticeable. The feet can be one option, but if your feet are painful or uncomfortable, choose another area instead.

One neuroscientist notes that being with our feet is one of the farthest places away from our head, which is often we spend a lot of time (ie, thinking or may be worrying)

Vision

3 ways to experiment with vision:

- Soft gaze
- Using our peripheral vision
- Closing our eyes

Gaze softly at one spot in front of you—don't stare or strain. Let your eyes relax. Now, without moving your eyes, see if you can notice what's at the edges of your vision.

Slowly include more of your surroundings—the sides, above, below, while keeping your eyes still.

Imagine your vision expanding like a wide-angle lens. Breathe slowly and notice if anything shifts in your body or mood.

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Vision and attention are closely connected. A softer or wider gaze can feel quite different from tightly focused vision. We can experiment with widening the visual field and simply notice whether anything shifts in the body, mood, or attention.

We often spend our days with focused, narrow vision, staring at things straight ahead for a long time (phones, computers, or TVs). Try gently expanding your gaze.

-Try soft or half-closed eyes if full closure isn't comfortable

-Relaxed eye expressions may help promote connection



Vocalizations



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Humming and Singing

- Combines a longer exhale, sound, vibration, and attention
- Offers the body a different sensory experience
- Some people find it soothing or grounding
- Notice what you experience
- Can also try gargling or lip trilling

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- Rather than just telling ourselves to calm down, humming gives us something physical to do: we lengthen the exhale, feel vibration, hear sound, and focus our attention. For some people, that combination can make it easier to settle
- Naturally slows and deepens the exhale
- Humming can increase nasal nitric oxide up to 15-fold- a naturally produced molecule involved in healthy airway function and defence
- less research on gargling and lip trilling/horse breath (demonstrate lip trilling)

Humming Bee Breath (Bhramari)

- inhale through the nose
- then gently press your fingers on the cartilage of your ears (or cover your ears with your hands)
- With closed lips, make a gentle buzzing sound on the exhale
- Pause and check in before the next breath



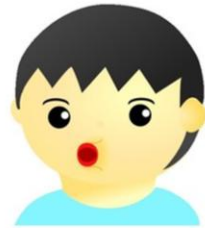
[Humming Bee Breathing Video](#)

This practice have been done for thousands of years and come from the yoga tradition. It's combines the benefit of both humming and breathing. Research suggests Bhramari breathing may influence breathing, stress, and autonomic activity, although responses vary between people

Bee Breath: can use any tone (high or low). Pause and rest once you finish your exhale. See how you feel. And when ready, you can do another round,, up to 2-5 mins or depending on what feels right for your system. This can be a daily or regular practice if it feels helpful.

Voo Sound

- Take a slow breath in
- Exhale with a low-pitched “vooo” sound (like a foghorn)
- Feel the sound vibrate through your chest and throat
- After each “voo,” pause and notice any sensations in the body
- Repeat 2 to 4 times, as feels right for you



[Voo Sound Video](#)

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This is a somatic exercise, created by Peter Levine. It’s similar to the bee breath, and also like chanting that is done in many different cultures.

Take a gentle, full inhale, then exhale slowly, make a low pitched the "voo" sound in as deep a tone- almost like foghorn. You will likely feel the vibrations in your body as you exhale (in your upper and lower chest, throat, and head/face). Continue making the sound, easily and gently, until the breath is completely expelled. Then rest and observe your body for a minute or two. No need to change or fix anything, just gently noticing.

The low sound creates vibration and naturally lengthens the exhale. Some people find that combination grounding or settling. Notice what happens for you

Gentle, Consistent Practice



Neurons that fire together wire together

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You can think of it like walking through a forest. The first few times you take a new path, it may feel unfamiliar or awkward. But with repetition, the path becomes easier to recognize and follow. The grass gets flattened, the way becomes clearer and slowly a trail begins to form.

In the same way, practices like grounding, noticing, or self-compassion can become more familiar and easier to access over time. We're not trying to retrain the body out of illness or force ourselves into a particular state. We're simply building familiarity with practices that may feel supportive.

You might've heard the phrase, 'neurons that fire together wire together.' This means that with repetition, certain skills and responses can become more familiar and easier to access.

Over time, we may also become more familiar with noticing a wider range of experiences - not only what is painful or difficult, but also what feels neutral, supportive, interesting, or pleasant. The aim isn't to override symptoms, but to give our attention more places it can rest

Pressure, Touch, & Rhythm



Pressure and Touch

- Touch and pressure send sensory info from the body to the brain
- This input can influence arousal, emotion & body awareness
- What feels supportive varies from person to person



Examples:

Manual massage (especially the feet)
Weighted blanket
Hugs (7-10 seconds)
Cuddling with a pet
Sitting close or leaning on someone
Affectionate touch
Brain Hug
Self Care Pose

30

There's a physical reason touch can affect how we feel. Our skin and deeper tissues contain sensory receptors that send information to the brain and spinal cord. Slow, steady pressure or pleasant touch can influence arousal, emotion, and body awareness, which may be one reason some people experience it as comforting or grounding.

Gentle, supportive touch can also affect how the body responds to stress. Some studies of foot massage have found changes linked with the body's rest-and-recovery system. Affectionate touch may also increase oxytocin, which is involved in bonding and connection, and may help reduce cortisol, one of our stress hormones.

This isn't true for everyone. For people with pain, sensory sensitivity, or trauma, some kinds of touch may feel uncomfortable or overwhelming. The important thing is to notice what feels supportive for you.

****Soothing touch doesn't have to come from another person. Some people may find comfort in placing a hand on the chest, holding a pillow, using a weighted**

blanket, cuddling with a pet, or gently massaging the feet

Brain Hug: Place one hand on the forehead and one on the back of the head, using gentle, steady pressure. Some people find this kind of pressure comforting or grounding. Hold only as long as it feels comfortable.

Self-Care Pose: Place one hand across the ribs or chest area and the other on the opposite shoulder. Breathe in a few times. This can offer a sense of support or self-contact -almost like saying, "I've got you."

Rhythmic Movement

- Rhythm and repetition can provide predictable sensory input
- Rocking, walking, swaying, or breathing can create repetitive patterns that may feel grounding or soothing.
- Moving slowly and repeating things helps us notice what's happening inside our bodies, stay steady, and feel more connected to ourselves



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Think of when a baby is distressed or crying, we rock them (and swaddle them, with pressure, like from the last slide)

Bullet # 3= Ability to notice what's going on in our body is called interoception. It's really important for people with chronic illness, because it difficult to tune in to the body when it doesn't feel good, and easy to push past our limits.

Butterfly Hug

- Body based (somatic) self soothing technique
- Combines rhythm, soothing touch, and uses both sides of your body
- Some people find it calming or grounding

[Butterfly hug video](#)



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Often used in EMDR to help calm and ground the nervous system. Demonstrate 3 options. (fingers hooked, hands crossed, or hands crossed on lap).

By crossing arms over the body in alternating left-right rhythm, you're engaging both sides of your body- and your brain-in a process called bilateral stimulation. The Butterfly Hug uses alternating left-right touch, sometimes called bilateral stimulation. This kind of rhythmic, repetitive input is used in EMDR and other approaches, and some people find it grounding or soothing. You can choose the pace, and whether your eyes are open or closed

Other Body-based, Rhythmic Movements

- Yoga
- Qi gong
- Tai Chi
- Tapping (EFT)
- Mindful Walking
- See resources slide for more info



Breath Techniques



Breathing

Hot chocolate breathing

-Slowing exhaling through your mouth, as if trying to cool down a cup of hot chocolate



Physiologic Sigh (cyclic breathing)

- Take a deep inhale through your nose
- Add a second, short inhale through the nose (to fully fill your lungs)
- Slowly exhale through your mouth—like you're gently fogging up a mirror

[Physiologic Sigh Video](#)

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Breathing practices can change the pattern and pace of the breath, and some people find that this affects how activated, settled, or focused they feel. Slower breathing and longer exhales can influence heart rate and other aspects of autonomic activity, but responses vary from person to person.

Breathing practices don't feel good for everyone, and that's okay. Only try them if they feel comfortable or supportive, and stop if you feel lightheaded, short of breath, or unwell

1) Hot choc aka Pursed lip breathing (like breathing out a straw)

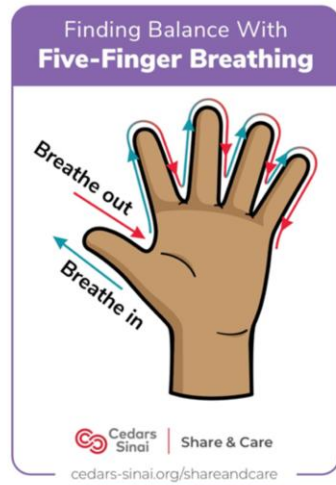
2) The physiological sigh is a pattern of two inhales followed by a long, slow exhale. In a Stanford study comparing several brief breathing practices, five minutes a day of cyclic sighing produced the greatest improvement in positive mood and the largest reduction in breathing rate. The researchers described it as a promising practice for stress management.

You don't need to practise it for five minutes here. We can simply try one or two sighs and notice how it feels. As with any breathing practice, stop if you feel

lightheaded or uncomfortable

5 Finger Breathing

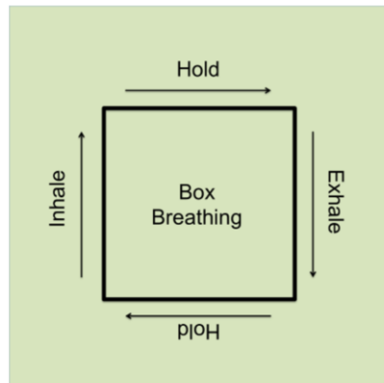
[5 Finger Breathing Info & Demo Video](#)



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- 1) This practice can be helpful when you're feeling too anxious or overwhelmed for regular breathing exercises. Stress often shows up in our chest, shoulders, or jaw—so focusing on the hands can feel more grounding and accessible.
- 2) As you breathe in, slowly trace up the side of your pinky finger with the index finger of your other hand. . As you breathe out, trace down the other side of your pinky finger—**watching and feeling** your hand as you go. Do each finger, Going all the way to the thumb, and then back again to the pinky finger.
- 3) This uses multiple senses-sight, touch, and breath-all at once. It keeps the brain gently engaged, which gives your attention several things to rest on at once. Some people find that makes the practice feel more grounding or easier to stay with than focusing on the breath alone

Box Breathing



[Box Breathing Video](#)

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Try to find something square or box like in your environment. Now imagine trying to breath around that box. Right now you could try using your computer or phone screen.

Inhale as your eyes go up one side of the box, gradually filling your lungs with air as you count to 4.. When you reach the top, hold your breath for 4 seconds as you picture going across the top of the box. Exhale gradually as your eyes move down the box for a count of 4. Pause your breathing again as your eyes go along the bottom of the box. Then repeat. This can be done 7-10 times in a row.

Slow, controlled breathing can help reduce heart rate and blood pressure and can influence other aspects of autonomic activity. The steady counting in box breathing also gives our attention something structured to follow, which some people find settling or focusing. It can also give our attention a temporary break from stressful thoughts or worries

Alternate Nostril Breathing (Nadi Shodhana)



[Alternate Nostril Breathing Video](#)

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Alternate Nostril Breathing: Alternate nostril breathing is a traditional yogic breathing practice. Research suggests it can affect breathing, blood pressure, attention, and autonomic activity, although the exact mechanisms are still being studied. People also experience it differently - some find it calming, while others find it more energizing or focusing..

We won't be practicing this one today due to time, but a short video link is included if you'd like to explore it later. One study showed that alternate nostril breathing lowered blood pressure but increased alertness—another reason to notice what your system needs

Savouring

- Negativity basis is hardwired into us

Neuropsychologist Rick Hanson:

“Brain is like Velcro for the Bad, Teflon for the Good”

- Counteract the basis by “taking in the good”
 - Notice
 - Savour
 - Absorb



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- Negativity bias is thought to have an evolutionary basis. For our ancestors, quickly noticing and remembering potential danger was important for survival. That tendency is automatic- it isn't something we consciously choose. Negative or threatening experiences can grab our attention quickly and often leave a strong impression (hand on a hot stove).
- Positive experiences can be easier to move past without really taking them in. Rick Hanson suggests deliberately staying with a positive experience for several seconds - perhaps 10–20 seconds - noticing it and letting ourselves absorb it. This gives the experience more opportunity to register and be remembered
- This doesn't mean ignoring what is difficult or forcing positive thinking. It's simply giving pleasant or supportive experiences a little more space in our awareness. Over time, repeatedly noticing and savouring positive experiences may help strengthen learning around those experiences and make them easier to notice and remember.
- Savouring is staying with it, absorbing it, Using all of our senses, how does this feel

in the body? Intentionally soak it in for longer (ie, pet the dog, we smell a nice smell, hug)

-Savouring is different than resourcing because savouring happens in the moment, we are not recalling it

Regulating through the Senses

Energizing

Taste slice of ginger or lime
Listen to an upbeat song
Look at vibrant, bright patterns
Splashing cold water on the face

Calming

Drink Chamomile tea
Listen to nature sounds
Look at cool colours
Soak in a warm bath



Combine two calming techniques for added effect—for example, sip chamomile tea while listening to bird songs.

Sensory modulation means using our senses—like sound, touch, taste, smell, and vision—to gently influence how we feel. Different sensory experiences may help us feel more alert, more settled, or more grounded. If you're feeling very activated, you might experiment with something soothing. If you're feeling low-energy or shut down, you might try something a little more stimulating.

Remember, modulation is not one-size-fits-all. Everyone is different. What works for one person may overwhelm another. Explore different gentle options and see what feels right for you.

Sensory experiences can affect how alert, settled, or grounded we feel. For example, a strong taste, sound, temperature, or texture can give the brain and body something immediate to notice. Some people find certain sensations energizing, while others find them soothing.

* Research suggests that listening to nature sounds can help reduce stress and anxiety. In one small real-world study of train passengers, nature soundscapes were more calming than music or podcasts. See [soundscape website](#) in resources.

Self Compassion



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Self Compassion

- Is the ability to treat ourselves with kindness and support when things are hard
- Can support a sense of connection and care
- May help us respond differently when things are difficult
- Can involve gentle vocalization or supportive touch



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Treating ourselves like we would a good friend when they are having a hard time

Self-compassion can reduce self-criticism and give us another way to respond when we're struggling, rather than adding judgment on top of what is already difficult.

Self-Compassion can include...

- 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.

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- Allowing yourself to feel and acknowledge your emotions without judgment.
- Recognizing that emotions are natural responses to challenging situations.

Three Questions of Self Compassion by Kirsty Arbon



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What do I feel?

Ex: *lonely, frustrated, sad, judged, etc.*

What do I need?

Ex: *connection, a rest, to blow off some steam, a kind word to self?*

What can I do?

Ex: *text a friend, listen to music, cry, nourishment, hydration, reflection time etc.*

The R.A.I.N of Self Compassion



RAIN is a four-step mindfulness-and-compassion tool designed to gently guide people through challenging emotions with kindness

- ❖ R ecognize
- ❖ A llow
- ❖ I nvestigate
- ❖ N urture

[R.A.I.N. - The Practice of Radical Self Compassion \(steps and pdf\)](#)

MORE Ways to Support Yourself

- Experiences of Awe (in person, virtual, video) Ex: staring at starry sky
- Being in nature
- Pleasant scents, if tolerated (ex: lavender, chamomile)
- Seeking out supportive connection with others (co-regulation)
- Drumming



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- 1) There's growing research on **awe**: those moments when we feel wonder, amazement, or a sense of something larger than ourselves. Studies have linked experiences of awe with lower stress and distress, more positive emotion, and greater well-being. Even short experiences, such as spending time in nature, looking at a beautiful landscape or night sky, art, music, or even watching something awe-inspiring on video, may be supportive. We don't need to create a huge or extraordinary experience. Awe can come from very ordinary moments- noticing the sky, trees, light, music, art, or something beautiful or surprising
- 2) Research also shows that supportive **social connection** is associated with better emotional and physical well-being. Feeling heard, understood, or supported by another person can reduce distress and help us cope with difficult experiences. Connection with animals can also be supportive for some people
- 3) Rhythmic activities such as **drumming** combine movement, sound, repetition, and attention. Some studies have found benefits for mood, stress, and social connection.

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



These are a few other practices people may find supportive. Laughter, meditation, body scans, and progressive muscle relaxation can affect mood, attention, tension, and stress in different ways. As with everything today, they won't feel helpful for everyone, so notice what works for you



Remember:

- You are not doing it wrong
- If helpful, practice during less stressful times too
- Have a list of 4-5 options that you have tried and find helpful
- Some experiences may need additional support or processing
- If a practice is helpful, consider where it might fit naturally into your day (ex: *breathing practice before you get out of bed or a foot massage at bedtime*)
- Can “layer” different techniques (ex: *music and touch*)

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Bullet #1: You may or may not notice a change, and either response is okay. Sometimes the effects are subtle or take time to notice, and sometimes a particular practice simply isn't helpful for us. That's useful information too. Go gently and notice what feels right for your body

Bullet #2: It can sometimes be easier to become familiar with a practice during relatively steady moments, rather than first trying to learn it when we're already very overwhelmed. It's a bit like practicing balance when the ground is steady rather than learning during an earthquake (Dr Elisha Goldstein)

Bullet # 4: Regulation and doing these techniques is helpful, but for some with trauma or complex PTSD processing may also be needed. Talking with a therapist, support person or close friend may help

Bullet #5: Build in body/ muscle memory. Oh right, it's time to get ready for bed, I'll do my foot massage

Bullet #6: Ex: breathing exercise with essential oil Ex: cup of herbal tea with

listening to music Ex: Music and touch

Resources

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)

[5 min Qi gong Practice \(seated or standing\)](#)

[10 min Seated Qi Gong Practice for Neck & Shoulder](#)

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

Resources

Websites Cont'd

[Free audio soundscapes for nervous system soothing](#)

[Sensory Calming Techniques](#)

[Cleveland clinic EFT tapping](#)

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

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

Questions and Comments?

