



Regulation Tools and Strategies

In these pages you will find strategies for support in returning your system inside your window of tolerance. Remember practicing helps strengthen your abilities to use in challenging moments and teaching your nervous system what calm feels like. Additionally, breathing exercises promotes deep breathing, which puts more oxygen into your system relaxing your body and allowing clearer thinking. There are many tools and skills to help calm or activate your nervous system here are a few (pages) to try.

Quick Somatic (Physical) Resources

1. Breathing Practices
 1. Deep Breathing (Diaphragmatic when overwhelmed)
 2. Heavy Sighing
 3. Hand Breathing
2. Connect with your Body
 1. Sitting Tall
 2. Relaxing each body part
 3. Move your body (Shake OR Swipe)
3. Focus on Sensations
 1. 5,4,3,2,1 Exercise
4. Feel your physical supports
 1. Feeling the chair, the floor
 2. Lean on the wall
5. Grounding
 1. Feeling the ground beneath your feet / pressing your feet into the floor
 2. Snuggle under a weighted blanket (or heavy blankets)
 3. Palming

Outdoor Resources

1. Go for a run or walk or bike ride
2. Feel the wind on your skin or the sun on your face
3. Put your bare feet on the ground

Engage With Others

1. Snuggle with a pet
2. Hug a friend/family member
3. Get a massage

My Favourite Strategies

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1st Step - Practicing the PAUSE

- The first step in self-regulation is AWARENESS
 - Take a moment to pause and notice what is happening in your body. Be present in this moment, in the feelings, in the emotions. *For more understanding of your Window of Tolerance see the handout "Stress and the Window of Tolerance."*
 - Once you have identified what is happening in your system choose the tools you have to down regulate or up regulate your system to bring you back into a safe and connected state.
1. **5, 4, 3, 2, 1 senses:** List 5 things you see, 4 things you hear, 3 things you feel, 2 things you smell, and 1 thing you taste.
 2. **Palming:** Remove any eyewear (glasses). Rub the palms of your hands together until you can feel heat generated in the palm of your hands. Gently place the palm of your hands over your eyes, not letting any light enter. Hold for 30 seconds or until the heat dissipates.
 3. **Shaking and Swiping:** This can be done standing or sitting. Shake out your body, arms, legs, whatever you are inspired to shake. Let gravity help with shaking towards the ground.
 4. **Swiping (Havening):** This can be done standing or sitting start brushing down your arms. You can also do your legs or body.
 5. **Place your hand on your chest:** May sound simple but it stimulates oxytocin (feel good hormone).
 6. **Dance:** Move your body with or without music, dance around the room.
 7. **Butterfly or cross body movements:** Placing your right hand on your right shoulder and your left hand on your right shoulder pat each shoulder individually like the wings of a butterfly.
 8. **Breathing:** Our breath is our anchor and helps to center ourselves. Take time to breathe mindfully in and out. Stay focused on the sensation of the air coming into your air passages and lungs, holding it, and then letting it out. Is the air cool? Is it warm? You can use a mantra, such as "in" as you breathe in and "out" as you breathe out, or count each breath from 1 to 10, starting over when you reach 10 or if you lose count.

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9. **Long Exhale:** Breathe in for the count of 1, pause at the top of the breath. Double the exhale (exhale for 2 counts), pause at the end of the breath. Inhale for 2 counts, pause at the top and exhale for 4 counts. Continue until the breath length becomes too long and if needed start again.
10. **Sighing:** Yes, you read that right. Take a breath in through your nose and let out a big sigh. Feel your body relax.
11. **Diaphragmatic breathing:** Put your hands behind your head with your elbows pointed outwards. Breathe deeply as long as you need to feel calm and relaxed.
12. **Breathing cycle:** Notice the beginning, middle, and end of each inhalation and exhalation (like how you can hear the beginning, middle, and end of sounds). Concentrate on the life of each breath.
13. **Hand on Chest:** Rest your hand over the centre of your chest, focus on your breath, and feel the rise and fall of your chest. Enhance the experience by repeating a calming word or visualizing a peaceful scene or by adding pressure.
14. **Keeping the Mind busy:** Using a fidget object (spinners, cubes, etc). A penny in your pocket, paperclip, recapping a pen top (in a meeting), wearing a different item like a ring, watch bracelet etc. Use these items to remind yourself to bring you thinking brain back online and to calm.
15. **Ocean breathing:** Imagine Ocean waves rolling onto the shore. Breath in as you focus on a wave coming into shore. At the top of the breath focus on the waves crashing into the shore and as you breathe out the waves going away from shore.
16. **Cold water or ice:** Splash cold water on your face, have a cold shower or place an ice pack on any area of your body that you feel helps (example, back of neck, forehead, stomach). Remember to breathe.
17. **Connect with a sound:** Using music or naturally occurring sounds (hum of an appliance). Close your eyes, tune in to the sound. Return to the sound when a distraction happens. Notice how you breathe along with it. What is seen, heard, smelled, tasted, or felt? What is happening in your mind and body?
18. **Draw your breath:** Using a piece a paper, draw in the air with your finger or on a flat surface, draw your breath like a mountain. Draw up the mountain as you breath in and down the mountain as you breath out. Notice how it changes.
19. **Finger circles:** Touch your thumb and first finger together. Make circles, like you are rubbing something between them. Start with quicker movements and after a few minutes start slowing the movement.

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- 20. Leaning on the wall:** Placing your back on a wall, with your knees bent. This gives grounding feedback to your body and nervous system.
- 21. Sitting Tall:** Sitting up tall stacks one vertebrae onto of another giving grounding feedback to your body and nervous system.
- 22. Wiggle Your Toes:** Wiggle your toes. Curl and uncurl your toes. Notice the sensations in your toes and feet.
- 23. Stomp or Press Away the Floor:** Stomp your feet into the floor pay attention to the feelings in your feet. Press the floor away, feel muscles in your legs fire.
- 24. Breathing colors:** Choose two different colors, one to breathe in and one to breathe out. Blue works well for the in-breath, since it matches the cool feeling of the air coming in. Red works well for the out-breath, as it matches the warm feeling of the air leaving your body. However, choose the colors you want, for the reasons you want. Close your eyes and pair each color with its breath.
- 25. Square breathing:** Start by breathing in for four seconds. Hold your breath for four seconds, and then breathe out for another four seconds. Repeat four times.
- 26. Deep breathing:** Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. To increase focus and quiet the mind, you can use a mantra such as “in” for when you breathe in and “out” for when you breathe out.
- 27. Breathe Your Hand:** Holding your hand up in front of you. Breathe in as you go up a finger away from your hand and down as you go down closer to your hand. Repeat using each finger.
- 28. Belly breathing:** Lie down or siting. Place a hand on your belly. Breathe in pay attention of how your belly expands. Set an alarm and breathe deeply for a minimum of 1 minute.
- 29. 10 details:** Anyplace, anywhere, pause and Observe and Describe 10 details you would not have otherwise noticed.
- 30. Create a safe place:** Create a place in your mind that is safe and comfortable. It may be a room, a cabin in the woods, or an imaginary land where you are protected by fire-breathing dragons! Use your senses to create this place. Notice how it looks, paying attention to the smallest details. Notice sounds, or silence. How does it feel? Go to this place whenever you need to soothe and calm yourself. (Prompt sheet available on website)

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- 31. Body scan:** Observe/scan your body from top to bottom. Note areas of tension or discomfort, relaxed and comfortable. Gently dismiss judgments that arise and take a deep breath into each area of the body where this discomfort exists. There is no agenda about changing how these feelings but notice differences that happen as you continue to breathe and connect.
- 32. Rigid body/relaxed body:** Standing, sitting or lying down use each body part OR the body all at once tighten your body (part). Hold that rigid feeling for 10 seconds or more. Then, relax your body (part) and assume a loose, flexible, and comfortable stance. Identify the different emotions and sensations that came up with each pose.
- 33. Standing on one leg:** You've seen the yoga poses. Transferring your weight to one leg, place your foot on the ankle with your toe on the ground OR on your calf OR on your inner thigh. Lean on a wall or chair if you need help balancing.
- 34. Guided imagery:** Use imagery from a CD, from a website, or recorded from your therapist or another person. Visualize that you are in the place that is being described, hearing the sounds, and feeling the other sensations. Lose yourself in this experience, and, when the exercise is over, bring its benefits back to the present moment.
- 35. Standing like a tree:** Stand up and pretend your legs are the roots of a tree, reaching your arms up to be the branches. Start to sway side to side as if you are blowing in the wind. Notice that your legs don't move, keeping you grounded. Imagine yourself being a tree when the winds of life whip up. Be flexible yet grounded, like a strong tree weathers a storm.
- 36. Blow bubbles:** Blow bubbles and watch as they float through the air, eventually popping. Notice sensations, such as your breathing, the air you blow into the bubble, and any emotions that arise from the activity.
- 37. Energy ball:** Imagine a ball as a source of negative emotional and mental energy. Hold on to the ball in your hand and take some time to process what it is like to hold on to your negative energy. Do you want to continue to hold on to it? Tell yourself that you have the choice to let the ball go and put it down. Alternatively, decide to bounce the ball off the floor or wall, imagining the negative energy leaving the ball with each bounce, until the ball becomes neutral again.
- 38. Find your centre:** Spend a moment to breathe and find your center. Know that finding your centre helps you to access your inner self and Wise Mind.
- 39. Lie in the grass:** Find a patch of lush, patch of green grass. Lie down, close your eyes. Turn your attention toward the connection and sensations between

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your body and the grass. Feel yourself supported by the ground. Breathe in the sensations and stay awhile. Notice what you are feeling. Alternatively, keep your eyes open and gaze at the sky, watching the clouds float by. Contemplate the connection between yourself, the earth, and the sky. Take your time in this place and breathe.

- 40. Practice compassion for yourself and others:** Bringing yourself or someone who you care about into your mind. Settle into a quiet state and focus on yourself or the other person think or say “may ___ experience peace and happiness.”

Additional

- Humming
- Singing
- Gargling
- Soften the muscles of your face.
- Tapping (see tapping pdf for more information)
- See also out “mindfulness tools.”