



Vagal Tone Tips

The vagus nerve activates the parasympathetic nervous system and basically functions as the button you can press to reduce stress. It originates on the surface of the brain but wanders throughout the body transmitting information to tissues and organs. The nerve plays a critical role in letting your body know that things are going to be okay.



One way they measure one's vagal tone is through one's HRV. Heart rate variability. (HRV) is the amount that the heart rate fluctuates between a breath in (when it naturally speeds up) and a breath out (when it naturally slows down). Higher vagal tone means that your body can relax faster after stress.

Heart Breathing

Step 1: Heart Breathing - Focus your attention on your heart area. Breath in deeply for 5-6 seconds and then out for 5-6 seconds.

Step 2: Heart Focus - Imagine you are breathing through your heart.

Step 3: While breathing and focusing on your heart - recall a positive feeling, maybe a place you feel calm in or a person or animal you cherish.



When you do any of these exercises, you're activating the muscles at the back of the throat and the vocal cords at the back of your throat, which are connected to the vagus nerve. Vagal tone increases which allows you to access a parasympathetic state more easily, making you feel relaxed.

Humming, Singing, Gargling

Hum: Try humming your favorite song or 'happy birthday' for 10-20 seconds.

Sing: Bolt out your favorite song and wow your family with your awesome voice.

Gargle: Simply gargle with water or even sea salt and water for 10-20 seconds.



Acute cold exposure will activate the vagus nerve. The sympathetic system (fight or flight) decreases when your body adjusts to cold, while your parasympathetic system (rest and digest) increases. Cold exposure may seem challenging at first, but start small and work your way up. (cold adapt)

Cold Water Exposure (cold adaptation)

Face: Start by sticking your face in cold water on/off over a 20 second cycle. Obviously come up for air as needed.

Shower: Start with a 30 second cold shower and work your way up to a few minutes.

Immerse: Once you are ready, consider cold immersion (ocean, lake, or a cold bath for 2-5 minutes or longer if tolerated).

