

STRENGTHEN VAGUS NERVE

When we strengthen the Vagus Nerve it strengthens our parasympathetic nervous system. It is the system responsible for rest and digestion. Vagus Nerve stimulation reduces inflammatory responses, helps the brain emit new cells, decreases depression and anxiety, increases relaxation after stress, increases memory, boosts the immune system, increases endorphins, and helps your gut talk to your brain.

The health of your Vagus Nerve is measured by the strength of the signal it sends. This is called vagal tone. Take a quiz to see how much vagal tone you have at <https://vagus.net/vagal-ton/>. Your heart rate variability is another way to measure vagal tone because heart rate variability and vagal tone go hand in hand.

Anything that elicits relaxation or brings forth positive emotions stimulates the vagus nerve.

Here are some key ways to activate + increase vagal tone:

1. Deep slow diaphragmatic breathing
2. Voo Breath- breathe in, breath out a low tone "vooooo" very slowly felt deep in the stomach (the gut sends messages to the brain and sends fibers down for better digestion)
3. Meditate or pray
4. Cold exposure- wash face in cold water, or 30 second cold shower, or full body immersion, ice pack on chest
5. Yoga or tai chi
6. Exercise
7. Lay on floor with legs up the wall
8. Chant "Om" in low tones
9. Sing or hum
10. Gargle
11. Laugh
12. Massage therapy- especially feet, neck, and ears
13. Vagus nerve stimulation device
14. Take probiotics to balance gut microbiome
15. Acupuncture or acupressure points

VAGUS NERVE EXERCISES

Vagus Nerve exercises involve small gentle little movements that release stored tension and strengthen the vagus nerve response to stress. Do not strain in any way.

Eye Exercises:

1. Hold hands behind head while laying down with knees up and face looking up straight to the ceiling. Gently move your eyes to the right for about 30 seconds or until you feel a release- a yawn, a sigh, deep breath, or swallow, Then move eyes to the left.
2. Gently hold head to the side with hand bending towards one side and look up to the opposite side gently; switch and do the opposite side; do for 30 seconds or until you feel a release.
3. Hold head to the side again like in #2 and gently pull rib cage gently on same side to create a slight c shape in body and look eye up to the opposite side for a little more opening.

Ear massages:

1. Gentle little circles on skin in hollow above the ridge that leads to canal and in canal pressing back towards canal on both sides
2. Gently pull ear out from skull, down and away, or up and away on both sides
3. Gently touch skin behind ear near hairline and gently pull skin upward to stretch it and hold it, then down and hold, and then outward and hold on both sides

Breathing Exercises:

1. **4-7-8 breathing**- tongue touching top of mouth (inhale 4 sec, hold 7, then exhale 8 sec making whoosh sound)
2. **Box breath**- in 4, hold 4, out 4, hold 4
3. **Pause breath**- Slowly stop breathing and pause. Notice when your body wants to take the next breath and then allow it to.
4. **Diagonal breath**- lay down with knees up, put right hand on hip and left hand on chest by your clavicle; send breath diagonally from hand to hand; send exhale from right hand to left and inhale back to right hand; do for 30 seconds or more; switch hands; think about the breath and send it diagonally (cross hands on chest and swivel hips out to the left and right when you start and then do it after; there should be more movement/extension after)
5. **Alternate nostril breath**- inhale in one nostril; exhale out other nostril; switch
6. **Pursed lip breath**- exhale like blowing on soup

Singing Monkey Breathing Exercise:

Close eyes and cover with hands, put thumbs in ears, and hum on exhale