

TOGETHER WITHIN

Regulation and Grounding



Did you know?

Stress and trauma have a powerful effect on us—not just in our minds, but in our whole bodies. When we experience something overwhelming, frightening, or painful, our brain and nervous system can go into high alert. Even if there is no real danger right now, the messages our brain sends can make us feel like something bad is happening or about to happen. This is because your brain and body are doing their best to keep you safe, but sometimes, they can react more strongly than is actually needed for the present situation.

When this happens, you might notice your heart is beating faster, your breathing speeds up or feels shallow, or your muscles get tense. You may have trouble thinking clearly, or your thoughts might feel jumbled, confused, or like they're running in circles. It's common to feel emotions intensely during these moments—you might notice anger, frustration, fear, panic, or even a sense of being frozen, numb, or shut down. You may also find it difficult to relax or return to feeling calm and steady.

All of this is part of a natural response—the body's way of trying to protect you from harm. However, after trauma or when under a lot of stress, your nervous system might become overly sensitive and interpret ordinary situations as threats. This can make it hard to feel in control or to respond the way you want to. This state is called **dysregulation**. It simply means your nervous system is having a hard time returning to balance. Remember, dysregulation is not your fault—it's a natural and common response to hard things you've been through.

What causes us to dysregulate?

Unresolved trauma — Past experiences can trigger strong emotional reactions in the present.

Chronic stress — Ongoing pressure or worry can overload our nervous system.

Lack of sleep — Being tired makes it harder to manage emotions.

Conflict or relationship stress — Arguments or feeling rejected can cause emotional overwhelm.

Feeling unsafe or threatened — Real or perceived danger can trigger fight, flight, or freeze responses.

Sudden changes or uncertainty — The unknown can activate fear and anxiety.

Overstimulation — Too much noise, activity, or sensory input can lead to overwhelm.



Here comes the science.....

The neuroscience behind dysregulation involves the brain's threat response system. When we feel overwhelmed or unsafe, the amygdala — the brain's alarm center — becomes activated, sending signals that trigger fight, flight, or freeze responses. This reduces activity in the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for thinking clearly, problem-solving, and self-control.

“Grounding techniques are most effective when they are simple, accessible, and tailored to everyday life—they don’t require special tools, lengthy instruction, or a perfect environment. In moments of overwhelm or distress, it is crucial to have strategies like deep breathing, noticing your surroundings, or feeling your feet on the floor that can be used anytime, anywhere.”



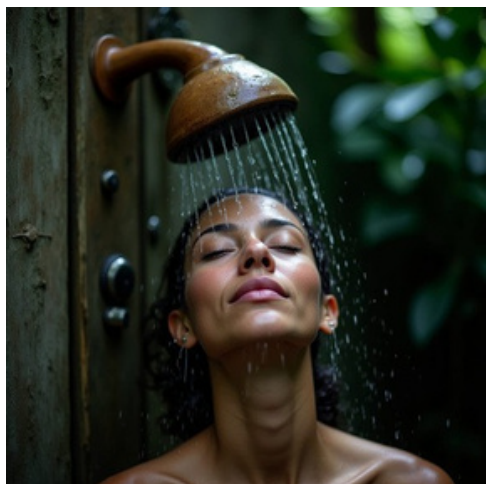
3 minute techniques for regulation

The Panic Button

- Sit down or stand comfortably wherever you are.
- Rest one hand on your chest and the other on your belly.
- Breathe in slowly through your nose for a count of four, noticing your belly rise.
- Hold that breath gently for two counts.
- Exhale slowly through your mouth for six counts, letting out a soft whooshing sound.
- Repeat this process five times, picturing each breath out releasing tension.
- With your last exhale, quietly say to yourself, "reset."



The Mind Shower



- Settle into a peaceful place, ideally near natural light.
- Close your eyes and picture yourself beneath a gentle waterfall of clear, bright light.
- Imagine this light flowing over you, carrying away tension and stress.
- Move your focus slowly from the top of your head down to your feet.
- Quietly name each concern as it’s rinsed away by the light.
- See yourself renewed and lightened.
- Take three deep, invigorating breaths before opening your eyes, feeling refreshed.

The Traffic Light Technique

- When you notice yourself becoming reactive, picture a red traffic light and pause. Take three slow, calming breaths while holding that red light in your mind.
- As the light shifts to yellow, gently ask yourself, "What’s truly going on right now?"
- When you visualize the light turning green, decide on a thoughtful, intentional response. Continue with purpose instead of reacting on impulse.



3 minute techniques for regulation



The 10:10:10 Method

- Close your eyes and focus on the challenge you're facing.
- Take a slow, deep breath and gently ask yourself, "Will this still feel important 10 minutes from now?"
- Breathe deeply again and reflect, "Will this still affect me 10 months from now?"
- With one more calming breath, ask, "Will this hold weight 10 years from now?"
- Then open your eyes, carrying a clearer sense of what is truly worth your time and energy.

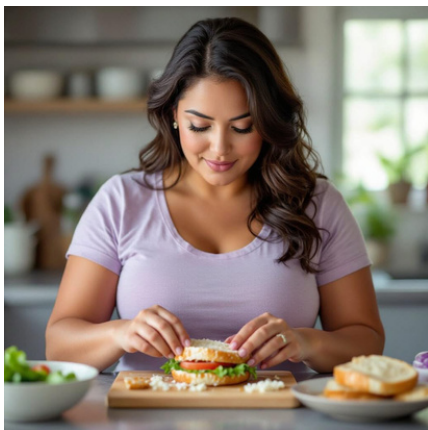
Pocket Vacation

Find a comfortable position and gently close your eyes. Bring to mind a place where you feel completely calm and safe — this can be a real location or one from your imagination.

Notice every detail using all your senses: what can you see, hear, smell, and feel around you? Spend a couple of minutes resting in this peaceful space. Before opening your eyes, choose one comforting sensation from this place to hold onto. Let that feeling stay with you as a steady anchor throughout your day.



Gratitude Sandwich



- Begin by naming one thing you truly appreciate in this moment.
- Gently notice and accept any challenging thought or emotion that arises.
- Then, name another good thing present in your life.
- Take a deep breath, holding space for gratitude, difficulty, and hope all at once.
- As you exhale, remind yourself that holding both struggle and gratitude is part of the human experience — softening negativity with the support of positive reflections on either side.

“Gratitude helps regulate the nervous system by shifting attention away from stress and perceived danger toward feelings of safety and sufficiency. This activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which supports calm and relaxation. Over time, practicing gratitude builds emotional resilience, making it easier to recover from moments of dysregulation.”

“It’s perfectly human to feel dysregulated at times; our emotions can flood, our thoughts can tangle, and our bodies may react before our minds make sense of anything. This doesn’t mean we’re broken or failing—it means we are alive and responding to a world that’s sometimes overwhelming.”



Screen-to-green Reset

- After using a screen, turn your device face-down.
- Shift your attention to something green or alive around you, like a plant or a tree outside.
- Take five slow, deep breaths while keeping your eyes on this natural object.
- With each breath out, imagine the tension from screen time leaving your body.
- On your last breath, choose a clear intention for what you will do next.



The 4-7-8 Sleep Launch

- Lie comfortably in bed, placing one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen.
- Slowly breathe in through your nose for a count of four.
- Gently hold that breath for seven seconds.
- Exhale fully through your mouth for a count of eight, making a soft whooshing sound as you do.
- Repeat this calming pattern four times.
- Let your thoughts wander naturally, without trying to force yourself to fall asleep.

Anchor Touch

- Sit or stand comfortably and take a slow breath.
- Gently press your fingertips together — thumb to each finger, one at a time.
- Focus on the pressure and sensation in your fingers.
- Notice the texture, warmth, or coolness of your skin.
- Optionally, press your palms together and hold for a few moments.
- As you breathe, say quietly in your mind: “I am here. I am safe.” Repeat as needed until you feel more steady and present.

