

Nervous System Regulation

USING SOMATIC TECHNIQUES

Insights from Peter Levine's
Somatic Experiencing®

"Trauma is not what happens to you,
it's what happens inside you as a
result of what happens to you."

— PETER LEVINE

THE CORE IDEA

Peter Levine, PhD, developed Somatic Experiencing® to help release the effects of overwhelming stress and trauma stored in the body.

Our nervous system is designed to manage stress—and return to balance—when it feels safe.



SELF-REGULATION

The body has inherent capacity to restore balance.



TOLERANCE

We work in small doses—just enough to stay resourced.



PENDULATION

We move between activation and resources.



ORIENTATION

Connection and safety in the present moment anchor us.



The body has the wisdom to heal.



The body wasn't meant to stay here. With support and gentle awareness, it can complete protective responses and return to balance.

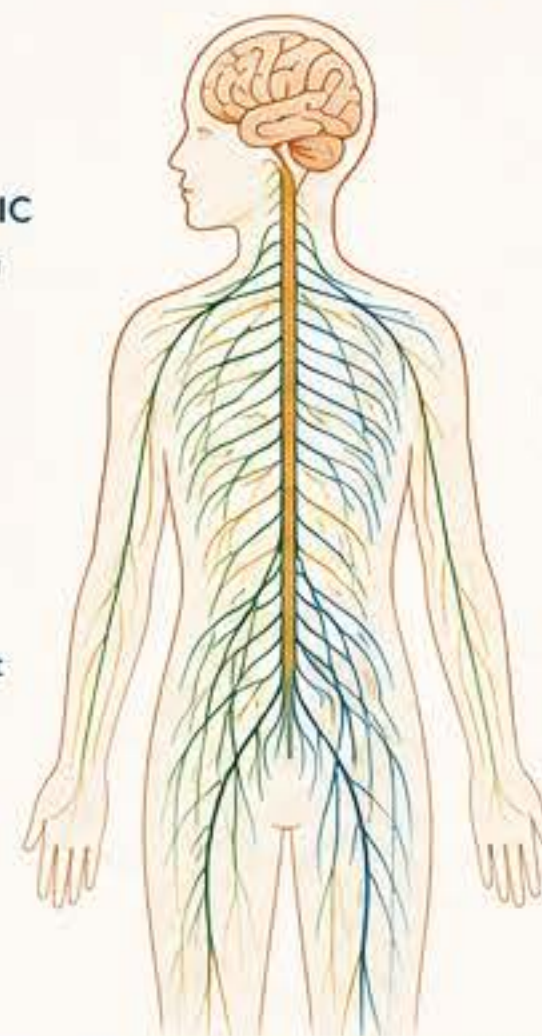
THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

Our internal regulatory system

SYMPATHETIC Mobilization

Alert
Active
Mobilized
Pressured
Anxious

Fight / Flight System



DORSAL VAGAL Immobilization

Numb
Shutdown
Heavy
Collapsed
Disconnected

Freeze System

WHEN OVERWHELM HAPPENS

If stress is too much, too fast, or without resources, the nervous system can get stuck in survival states.



HYPERAROUSAL

Too much activation
Racing thoughts, anxiety, irritability, panic, tension, restlessness, overwhelm



HYPOAROUSAL

Too little activation
Numbness, fatigue, shut down, depression, disconnection, collapse



You don't have to force change. When we listen to the body with curiosity and compassion, it knows how to heal.

SOMATIC TECHNIQUES TO SUPPORT REGULATION

Simple, body-based practices that help us feel safer, discharge stress and expand capacity.

1 ORIENT

Notice safety around you.



- Look around slowly
- Notice colors, shapes, distances
- Feel your connection to the present

2 GROUND

Connect with support.



- Feel your feet
- Notice contact and support
- Sense the pull of gravity

3 PENDULATE

Move between challenge and resource.



- Check in with sensation
- Shift to something neutral or pleasant
- Return and repeat gently

4 TITRATE

Go in small doses.



- Approach what feels difficult gradually
- Stay within your window of tolerance
- Stop while you're resourced

5 DISCHARGE

Allow energy to complete.



- Notice impulses (tremble, sigh, move)
- Allow micro-movements
- Let the body finish what it started

6 DEEPEN CONNECTION

Engage with safety and support.



- Connect with people, animals, nature
- Feel seen and supported
- Let connection regulate



TRUST THE PROCESS

Healing happens in the body, not just in the mind. With patience, presence, and the right support, the nervous system can return to balance, resilience, and aliveness.



REVELATION 21.5 THERAPY, PLLC

Behold, I make all things new.

— REVELATION 21:5 —

Trauma-Informed • Faith-Centered • Whole-Person Care



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FEELING WORDS

Tune in. Name it. Honor it.

Using feeling words helps us increase awareness, process emotion and come back to balance.



CALM / PEACEFUL

Calm, peaceful, relaxed, content, serene, centered, at ease, quiet, relieved, tranquil, safe, grateful



SAD / HEAVY

Sad, down, discouraged, lonely, grief, hurt, disappointed, heavy, weepy, defeated, hopeless, emptied out



ANGRY / FRUSTRATED

Angry, frustrated, irritated, resentful, annoyed, furious, outraged, agitated, tense, bitter, fed up, exasperated



SCARED / ANXIOUS

Scared, afraid, anxious, worried, overwhelmed, panicked, nervous, terrified, fearful, insecure, shaky, alarmed



JOYFUL / CONNECTED

Happy, joyful, excited, inspired, hopeful, proud, curious, connected, loved, playful, motivated, energized, peaceful

BODY SENSATION WORDS

Your body is always communicating.

Noticing body sensations helps us stay present, process stress and support regulation.

- Tight
- Tense
- Heavy
- Light
- Pressure
- Warm
- Cold
- Hot
- Cool
- Throbbing
- Pulsing
- Ache
- Sore
- Pain
- Numb
- Tingling
- Vibrating
- Shaky
- Jittery
- Fluttery



- Restless
- Fidgety
- Stiff
- Weak
- Fatigued
- Drained
- Empty
- Full
- Bloating
- Knot in stomach
- Butterflies
- Chest tightness
- Racing heart
- Short of breath
- Yawning
- Sweaty
- Clammy
- Floating
- Grounded
- Spacious



There is no right or wrong.
All sensations are information.
Curiosity helps. Judgment hurts.

*"Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts."*

– PSALM 139:23

THE VOO TECHNIQUE

A vagus nerve toning technique from Peter Levine's Somatic Experiencing®.

The VOO helps tone the vagus nerve, supporting a Ventral Vagal State—the body's state of calm, connection, safety, social engagement and resilience.

1. VOO AS VOLUME (TONE)



Make the "VOO" sound — a low, foghorn sound on the out breath.

This tones the vagus nerve, helping to slow the system and support a Ventral Vagal State.

Examples: Vooooo... (low, steady hum like a foghorn on the out breath)

2. VOO AS VOLUME WITH EXPRESSION



Begin with "VOO" and let it build into a growl or roar. Open your mouth if it wants to. Let the sound move through your body.

This helps express pent-up anger, frustration or rage in a healthy way.

Examples: Vooooo... → VOOORRR!!! (growl, roar, like a bear)



WHAT IS A VENTRAL VAGAL STATE?

It is the state of safety and connection in the nervous system. When we are in this state, we feel calm, grounded, socially connected and able to be present with life. It allows our body to rest, digest, heal and relate.



*Small shifts, done regularly,
create lasting change.*

"Be still, and know that I am God."
– PSALM 46:10



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