Ear Massage — Vagus Nerve Exercise

Handout 7b · Vagus Nerve Exercise Series · 305 Psychotherapy Group LLC

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What this does: The vagus nerve has a branch — the auricular branch — that runs directly through and around the outer ear. Gentle massage of specific ear landmarks stimulates this branch, activating a parasympathetic response that slows heart rate, reduces cortisol, and shifts the nervous system toward calm. This technique can be done anywhere, anytime.

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

1 Outer ear cartilage

Using your thumb and forefinger, gently roll and massage along the cartilage of your outer ear — starting where your ear meets your head, moving down to your earlobe, then back up.

> Continue up and down for 30 seconds. Use gentle, unhurried pressure.

2 Ear indent (concha)

Just outside your ear canal there is a slight depression or bowl shape — this is the concha. Use your forefinger to apply gentle circular pressure here for 30 seconds.

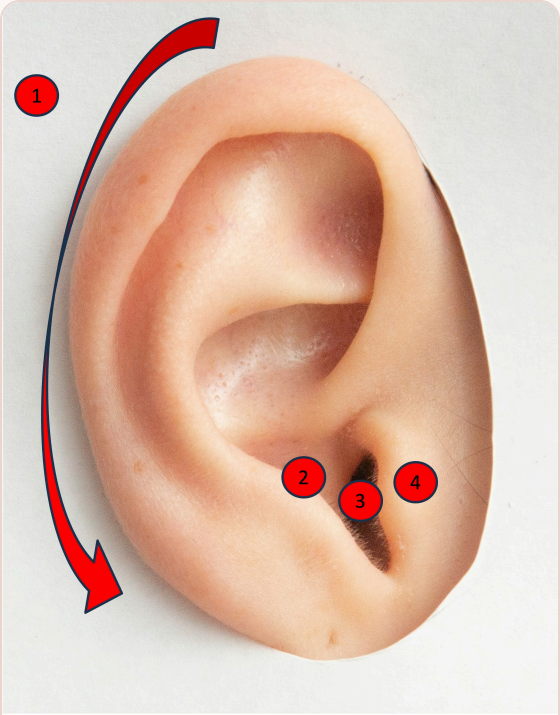
3 Ear canal entrance

Place the tip of your forefinger just at the entrance of your ear canal — do not press in or go past the tip of your finger. Apply gentle circular pressure around the opening for 30 seconds.

4 Tragus

The tragus is the small tab of cartilage at the front of your ear canal. Use your thumb and forefinger to gently pinch and massage it with light pressure for 30 seconds.

Repeat on the other ear — switch sides and complete all four steps again. You may also do both ears simultaneously. Allow any yawning, sighing, or swallowing — these signal the vagal brake engaging.



Massage these areas gently — outer cartilage, concha, ear canal entrance, and tragus

Photo: Franco Antonio Giovanella

EAR LANDMARK GUIDE

1. **Outer cartilage (helix)** — the rim of the ear from top to lobe
2. **Concha** — the bowl-shaped depression outside the ear canal
3. **Ear canal entrance** — the opening; fingertip only, do not press in
4. **Tragus** — the small cartilage tab at the front of the canal

Source: Rosenberg, S. (2017). *Accessing the Healing Power of the Vagus Nerve.* North Atlantic Books. | Porges, S.W. (2011). *The Polyvagal Theory.* W.W. Norton & Company.

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