



MAKING SPACE TO HEAL

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# Self-Regulation

Disarming your autonomic nervous system without suppressing yourself

## Conceptual Framework

# Understanding Self-Regulation

- **Beyond Suppression:** Self-regulation is not about stifling emotions or achieving constant, forced calm.
- **Nervous System Stewardship:** The intentional practice of managing your physiological state and internal 'volume'.
- **Restoring Agency:** Creating the internal space to:
  - Live with dignity
  - Make conscious choices
  - Act despite past conditioning



# The 60-Second Reset

A simple protocol for immediate nervous system regulation



## Orient (10s)

Slowly identify five distinct objects in your immediate environment to ground your senses.



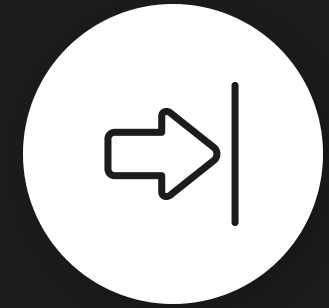
## Exhale (20s)

Perform three deep, controlled exhalations, each lasting six seconds to calm the body.



## Release (10s)

Consciously unclench your jaw, drop your shoulders, and relax your hands.



## Next Step (20s)

Identify one gentle, manageable action you can take in the next two minutes.

**Safety Note: If you feel overwhelmed, stop immediately and focus your attention on the physical sensation of your feet firmly planted on the ground.**



# Challenges in Regulating the Body After Religious Harm

Reclaiming internal authority in high-control environments

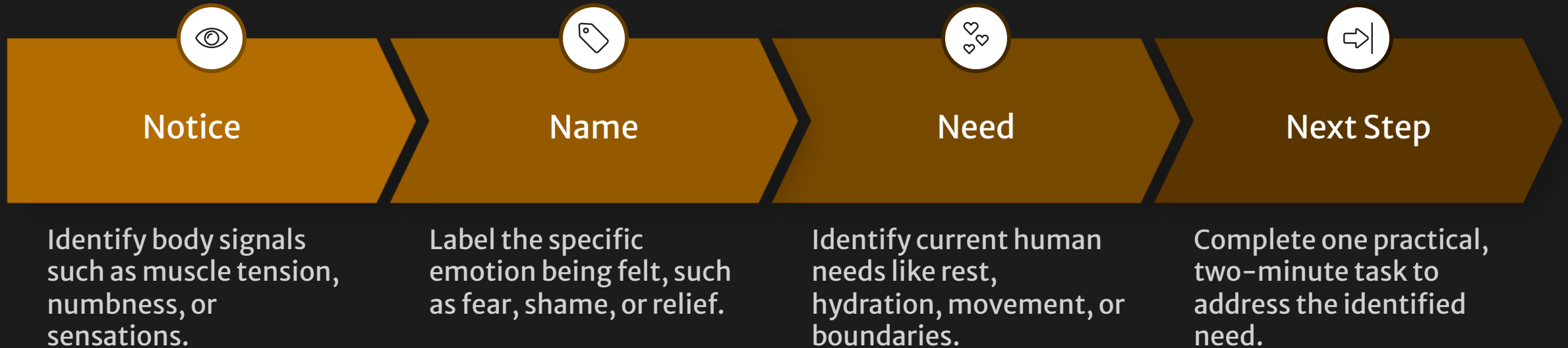
- **Fear**  
Often pathologized as a lack of faith rather than a natural protective response.
- **Boundaries**  
Commonly viewed as an act of selfishness rather than essential self-care.
- **Anger**  
Frequently equated to rebellion or sin instead of a valid reaction to injustice.
- **Exhaustion**  
Often deemed a spiritual failure instead of systemic burnout.

**Self-regulation is the essential process of reclaiming the internal authority lost in high-control environments.**



# The Four-Step Sequence

A repeatable framework for daily check-ins



Implementing this short sequence helps maintain daily awareness and emotional regulation.

# Physical & Body-First Strategies

Using physiological regulation when cognitive processing is limited



- **Interoceptive scanning**  
Build present-moment awareness by identifying and observing physical sensations without judgment.
- **Progressive muscle release**  
Systematically tension and relax specific focal points like the jaw, neck, and shoulders to reduce physical stress.
- **Gentle movement**  
Regulate the nervous system through intentional stretching, mindful walking, or grounding techniques like firm foot contact.

**When the mind cannot reason, use the body to communicate safety.**

# Mental Grounding and Breathwork

Effective strategies to manage physiological flooding and dissociation



## Grounding (5-4-3-2-1 Technique)

Re-orient to your current environment by identifying 5 things you see, 4 you can touch, 3 you hear, 2 you smell, and 1 you can taste.



## Breathwork

Shift away from sympathetic arousal by focusing on a longer exhale. A recommended cadence is a 4-second inhale followed by a 6-second exhale.

Strategy Overview

# Emotional Regulation Without Suppression

Regulation keeps you present with reality without letting it rule you. Utilize these two core practices to build intentionality:

- **Daily Tracking:** Use the 4-step sequence to identify patterns and emotional triggers systematically.
- **Structured Time-outs:** Explicitly communicate the need for space or regulation to return to a situation calmly and intentionally.



# Building Rhythmic Capacity

Self-regulation through steady, consistent practice



## Morning: Orienting Practice

Establish presence and awareness of the immediate environment.



## Midday: Two-Minute Check-in

Observe current internal states and recalibrate.



## Evening: Exhale and Muscle Release

Consciously signal safety and prepare the body for rest.

Focus on building capacity through small, consistent sequences.

# Knowing When to Seek Support

Recognizing personal limits and accessing essential resources



- **Recognizing Personal Limits**  
If you feel flooded, disoriented, or unsafe in your body, it is important to pause and step back from your current task.
- **When to Seek Professional Help**  
Consult a professional if daily functioning is impaired, dissociation becomes frequent, or you experience thoughts of self-harm or hopelessness.
- **Immediate Crisis Resources**  
For immediate danger, dial 911. For 24/7 confidential crisis support, text or call 988.