2024

Wholeness counselling & psychotherapy

Activate the parasympathetic nervous system

Reduce anxiety and stress

1. Deep Breathing Exercise: Focus on slow, deep breaths to stimulate the vagus nerve. Try the 4-7-8 technique: inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 7 seconds, and exhale slowly for 8 seconds.  
  
2. Meditation and Mindfulness: Practice mindfulness meditation to centre your thoughts and promote a sense of calm. Apps like Calm or Headspace can guide you.  
  
3. Progressive Muscle Relaxation: Tense and then relax each muscle group in your body to release physical tension, which can alleviate anxiety.  
  
4.Yoga and Tai Chi: These practices combine gentle movement, stretching, and breath control to foster relaxation and activate the parasympathetic response.  
  
5. Nature Walks: Spending time in nature helps reduce stress hormones and increases feelings of well-being.  
  
6. Warm Baths or Showers: Warm water can be intensely soothing, promoting relaxation and reducing muscle tension.  
  
7. Gentle Exercise: Activities like walking, swimming, or cycling can activate the parasympathetic nervous system without overwhelming you.  
  
8. Visualization Techniques: Picture a peaceful scene in your mind to divert your thoughts from anxiety and cue relaxation.  
  
9. Listening to Calming Music: Soft music or nature sounds can lower heart rate and tension levels, promoting a peaceful state.  
  
10. Aromatherapy: Essential oils like lavender, chamomile, and cedarwood can help relax the mind and body when diffused or inhaled.  
  
11. Healthy Eating: Ensure a balanced diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids, magnesium, and antioxidants, which can support nervous system health.  
  
12. Limit Stimulants: Reduce consumption of caffeine, nicotine, and sugar, which can heighten anxiety and stress responses.  
  
13. Social Connection: Building and maintaining social bonds can help invoke a sense of safety and relaxation.  
  
14. Mindful Eating: Pay attention to the flavours and textures of your food, allowing a pause to acknowledge and enjoy the experience.  
  
15. Gratitude Journaling: Writing down things you're grateful for can shift focus from anxiety to positive thoughts.  
  
Consistency in these practices can lead to better anxiety management. Experiment with different techniques to find what works best for you.