

## 6 Ways to Calm the Nervous System After Trauma

Trauma can activate the body's "fight, flight, or freeze" response, often leaving the nervous system in a state of heightened alert. These practices can help soothe the nervous system and support recovery:

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### 1. Grounding Techniques

Grounding helps you reconnect with the present moment and regulate overwhelming emotions. Try these methods:

- **5-4-3-2-1 Exercise:** Identify 5 things you can see, 4 you can touch, 3 you can hear, 2 you can smell, and 1 you can taste.
- **Sensory Awareness:** Focus on the feeling of your feet touching the floor or your body being supported by a chair.

### 2. Deep Breathing

Breathing exercises activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which counteracts the stress response.

- **Box Breathing:** Inhale for a count of 4, hold for 4, exhale for 4, hold again for 4. Repeat for several minutes.
- **Diaphragmatic Breathing:** Breathe deeply into your belly (not your chest), allowing your diaphragm to expand. Exhale slowly.

### 3. Mindful Movement

Movement can help release tension in the body. Slow, gentle exercise helps promote a sense of safety and relaxation.

- **Yoga:** Focus on slow, controlled movements and deep breathing.
- **Walking:** Take a slow walk, paying attention to the rhythm of your steps and your breath.

### 4. Self-Soothing Techniques

Provide comfort to your body and mind with activities that bring a sense of calm.

- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR):** Tense and release each muscle group in your body, starting from your feet and working up to your head.
- **Hot/Cold Therapy:** A warm bath, a hot compress, or a cool cloth can have a calming effect.

## 5. Restorative Sleep

Sleep is essential for healing and resetting the nervous system. Create a sleep routine that promotes deep rest:

- **Limit Screen Time:** Turn off electronics at least 30 minutes before bed.
- **Create a Calming Environment:** Keep your room dark, quiet, and cool. Use relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, to calm the mind before sleeping.

## 6. Connection and Support

Humans are social creatures, and connecting with others can help regulate the nervous system.

- **Talk to a Trusted Friend or Therapist:** Sharing your feelings and experiences can provide validation and emotional relief.
- **Social Support:** Spending time with loved ones or in supportive communities can help reduce feelings of isolation and increase a sense of safety.

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Be gentle with yourself. Your nervous system is learning to heal, and even small steps to calm yourself can help.

Healing from trauma takes time, and these practices should be used consistently and at your own pace. It's important to seek professional help if you find that trauma responses are interfering with your daily life or if you need additional support.