

Nervous System Cues for Fitness

These tips are for those looking to become more attuned to, and responsive to, their body's signals.

When we start listening to what our body has to say, we place ourselves in the drivers seat of our health. See this as a skill that, over time, makes you more resilient because your mind and body are more engaged together. They are working congruently, not against each other.

I call this kind of alignment a state of Embodied Health.

In the case of this PDF, we are using body cues during fitness to answer the question: *"Is this movement supportive right now, or do I need to pull back?"*

Breath & Airway (Primary NS Governor)

Supportive signs

- Nasal breathing stays easy
- Exhale naturally lengthens
- No urge to sigh or gasp

Pull-back cues

- Mouth opens unintentionally
- Breath feels shallow or urgent
- Breath holding during effort

Practice

- Pause and take 2 long nasal exhales
- Resume at half the pace or load

Jaw, Tongue & Face (Threat Barometer)

Supportive signs

- Jaw hangs softly
- Tongue rests wide on the floor of the mouth
- Forehead and eyes feel relaxed

Pull-back cues

- Jaw clenching
- Tongue pressing into teeth
- Furrowed brow or fixed gaze

Practice

- Let lips part slightly

- Gentle jaw circles
- Soften the eyes and widen peripheral vision

Neck & Shoulders (Over-Recruitment Check)

Supportive signs

- Neck feels long
- Shoulders move independently of ears
- Arms feel light

Pull-back cues

- Shoulders creeping up
- Neck gripping during effort
- Arms feeling heavy or disconnected

Practice

- Shrug and release slowly
- Exhale while letting shoulders melt down
- Reduce range or resistance

Trunk & Core (Stability vs Bracing)

Supportive signs

- Belly moves with breath
- Effort feels distributed
- No “holding” to stabilize

Pull-back cues

- Abdominal gripping
- Rib flare or rigid torso
- Feeling like you must brace to continue

Practice

- Place a hand on the lower ribs
- Exhale and feel ribs soften
- Resume with smaller movement

Feet & Grounding (Orientation + Safety)

Supportive signs

- Clear pressure through heels or mid-foot
- Sense of weight dropping downward
- Feeling connected to the floor

Pull-back cues

- Weight shifting to toes
- Numbness or instability
- Feeling “floaty” or ungrounded

Practice

- Pause and feel both feet
- Gently press toes, then heels
- Slow the transition

Effort & Internal Dialogue (Cognitive Overlay)

Supportive signs

- Neutral or curious thoughts
- Willingness to stop without frustration
- Sense of completion

Pull-back cues

- “Push through” thoughts
- Irritation when slowing down
- Loss of awareness of surroundings

Practice

- Ask: “Could I stop right now?”
- If the answer is no → reduce demand

After-Effects (Most Important Check)

Supportive signs

- Calm or neutral after movement
- Stable energy later in the day
- Improved sleep or mood

Pull-back cues

- Delayed fatigue or heaviness
- Irritability or wired-tired feeling
- Sleep disruption

Practice

- Track how you feel 6–24 hours later
- Use that data to adjust next session

As always, if you need more tailored, real-life support, that’s where I come in. I help people become more attuned to their body so they can respond before problems develop. I also help people heal from long term concerns utilizing practical nervous system and functional medicine-guided approaches.

Reach out any time!

Megan