



Raven Recorded Version

A self-directed yoga series
to build resilience, mitigate stress and cultivate self-awareness.

Orientation Booklet and Participant Journal

Funded by the
Department of National Defence's
Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Centre

Canada



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What is it?

Raven Recorded Version is a resource that was developed under the *Beyond Zero Tolerance Project*, funded by the Department of National Defence's Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Centre.

Intended for women who identified as having an experience with sexual misconduct in the wider Defence community, its original launch was an in-person group experience, over an 8-week period of time.

Raven Recorded Version, can be experienced by anyone who is curious about yoga as part of their self-care journey. It includes the following:

- 8 recorded themed yoga classes with introductory videos for each class
- The yoga classes vary in duration and include movement linked with breath
- Optional Participant Journal that augments the themed yoga classes
- Delivered with a trauma-aware lens
- Self-directed, one can have an experience at their own pace and choice

The themes covered in the *Raven Recorded Version* yoga series and Participant Journal are as follows:

- Yoga and the Nervous System
- Safety
- Self-Awareness
- Values, Boundaries and Self-Compassion
- Mind-Body Connection
- Self-Advocacy
- Honoring Growth
- Community and Connection

The Participant Journal was created to help augment themes presented in the yoga class aspect of the *Raven Recorded Version* series. The material in the journal contains informational insight, reflective exercises, and practical tips and tools. The subject matter is presented in an "overview fashion", with the intention to bring forth general awareness and/or inspire further learning that may support one's experience.

The participant journal also includes an optional Check-In Template for each yoga practice, that prompts you to tune in and express what you are noticing in your body and/or mind before and after each yoga practice. There is also an opportunity to review and incorporate noted affirmations that corresponds with each themed practice. One can choose how they want to relate to and/or participate in this aspect, if at all.

Who is it for?

- *Raven Recorded Version* can be experienced by anyone who is curious about exploring or incorporating yoga and/or inner-inquiry into their lives.
- *Raven Recorded Version* is best experienced at a time when there is a felt sense of physical, mental and emotional safety, support and stability in one's life, and in the absence of acute and immediate crisis.

Considerations

In an effort to best support one's self in making an informed decision to participate in *Raven Recorded Version*, please consider the following prior to:

- *Raven Recorded Version* is in no way intended to diagnose, treat or cure any known or unknown physical, mental, or emotional ailment, injury or issue.
- Please consult with a medical physician and/or alternate and appropriate health care practitioner before you begin any or all exercise programs and/or inner inquiry journeys, to help best discern if it is right for you, and to learn how to take care of yourself.
- There are specific contraindications to yoga as a physical exercise experience, as well as a potential mental and/or emotional experience. Please include this consideration in your consultation with a physician or appropriate health care practitioner as it may relate to you, prior to your participation.
- As the participant of *Raven Recorded Version*, you assume the risk of practicing yoga and/or engaging in the Participant Journal and therefore release any liability to New Start Counselling, the staff at New Start Counselling, and/or the Yoga Instructor and Program Developer of *Raven Recorded Version*, of any and all liability claims. You agree that you are participating at your own risk and responsibility.
- Yoga is best experienced prior to consuming a heavy meal or on a full stomach, with proper hydration.
- You can follow the introductory videos, recorded yoga classes and/or the participant Journal in chronological order, or feel free to pick and choose whatever theme you feel called to, in any order you prefer.
- You may choose to review the recorded yoga classes and/or participant journal in full, prior to participating, to discern if it is right for you.

What will one need?

To experience the yoga classes, you will need the following:

- Access to YouTube
- Yoga Mat
- Space large enough to roll out a yoga mat and move around
- Clothing that allows you to move within your range of motion
- Anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes to experience a full and completed recorded class
- Perhaps water for hydration
- You may want to have a pillow, blanket, or a sturdy book or water bottle to use for props and to support your body in the yoga shapes, but not entirely necessary

How do I access the yoga classes?

You can experience the yoga classes from Raven Recorded Version's by:

1. Clicking on the link below titled: "Raven Recorded Version Yoga Class Playlist"
2. The hyperlink will appear
3. Click on the hyperlink
4. That will take you directly to the YouTube playlist.

Raven Recorded Version Yoga Class Playlist



Raven Recorded Version

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Participant Journal

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Welcome To Raven



Image source: Purchased from etsy

I want to acknowledge your presence in this moment.

This participant journal was created to help augment themes presented in the yoga aspect of the *Raven Recorded Version* series. The material contains informational insight, reflective exercises, and practical tips and tools. The subject matter is presented in an "overview fashion", with the intention to bring forth general awareness and/or inspire further learning that may support your journey.

You can access the *Raven Recorded Version* yoga classes by clicking here:

[Raven Recorded Version Yoga Class Playlist](#)

You have full choice when designing your relationship with this participant journal. It is completely optional and meant to be self-directed. You may choose not to explore any further, simply scan the material, be selective in what you review, or decide to complete it in-full.

Regardless, however it looks, your choice is welcomed here, may change over time and will not be judged.

You are also free to unpack the material in a more in-depth manner, with anyone else of your choosing, outside of your self-directed context.

This experience belongs to you. Please take good care of yourself along the way.



Did you know...

Ravens are largely misunderstood creatures.

Known to represent characteristics of survival and adaptability, the raven's energy will help one understand both aspects of the shadow and aspects of the light.


Resourceful and wise birds, ravens transform what exists in the current environment into useful tools.

Bringing guidance and opportunity to those who are seeking such, the raven is seen as a messenger of wisdom and truth.

May you have space held for you to claim your own wisdom and truth.



Image source: Purchased from etsy



The Nervous System & Yoga

The Nervous System

Yoga and the Nervous System

Benefits of Trauma Informed Yoga

Reflective Exercise

Check-In

Tips and/or Tools



The Nervous System

Fed by our 5 senses, and some may even say our "6th sense", our nervous system is like our physical information highway. Its key functions are concerning safety, survival and formulating reactions and responses based on past experiences, the sensations in our body and our current environment. Our nervous system informs all other systems in our body.

It contributes to how we sense and make sense of our world and our relationships within it, with things like establishing categories, labels and frameworks, etc.

It is how we are able to think, feel and behave and formulate beliefs.

This is an internal process, but it is also very much informed by past and present lived experiences, including personal life events, societal happenings, and global matters.

Increasing our awareness of our nervous system, especially when it comes to stress and trauma responses, can lend to self-compassion. This can deepen our understanding of why we may be thinking, feeling and behaving they way we do about ourselves and others, in relation to our lived experiences that have overwhelmed us.

Deb Dana, a Clinical Social Work Therapist and significant contributor within the trauma community says that: "understanding our nervous system allows us to extend kindness to ourselves when we don't behave the way we wish we could."

She goes on to indicate: "Our nervous system is our constant companion, and understanding its workings can help us find a path to healing and growth."

Our nervous system is complex, but simply put, we have a Central Nervous System, made up of our brain and and spinal cord. And a Peripheral Nervous System, that includes nerve fibers that branch out from our spinal cord.



The Nervous System Continued

There are two parts of the ***Peripheral Nervous System*** that are especially important because they help us respond to stress by taking action for safety, as well as being able to restore and repair as part of completing the stress response. When these functions are regulated, we are able to connect with ourselves and others. It is important to understand that these parts of our nervous system are autonomic (involuntary) and can not be controlled with conscious thought. They respond to what we sense and make sense of, through building references from past lived experiences.

One part of this autonomic aspect of our peripheral nervous system is called the ***Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS)***. This is like our gas pedal. It is responsible for mobilizing our body and mind's survival responses to a felt sense of threat. Things contract and brace in the body for essential action (think drawing a slingshot for launch). This part of our nervous system can get pushed beyond capacity when overwhelmed and we can get stuck playing out stress responses in our body and mind. In part, this can be viewed as what is referred to as trauma. This is why trauma is not just an event, it very much involves biological, physiological and psychological responses in the body and mind that can be considered nervous system dysregulation.

The other part is our ***Parasympathetic Nervous System (PSNS)***, which is like our brake pedal. It is responsible for bringing our rest and repair responses online after being activated by a felt sense of threat or stressor. It helps to restore the activations from the SNS.

When the threat or stressor is believed by the body and mind to have been mitigated or removed, and our nervous system is not overwhelmed beyond capacity, we are in a state of nervous system regulation and we return to our ability to experience all ranges of emotions, as we are able to access all parts of our nervous system.

The PSNS and the SNS are meant to work together.

The Nervous System Continued

Central Nervous System (CNS)

Brain and Spinal Cord

Command Centre; like the main road

5 Senses

Takes in sensory information, processes the information and sends out motor signals based on predictions

Thought, emotion, language, movement, memory, etc.

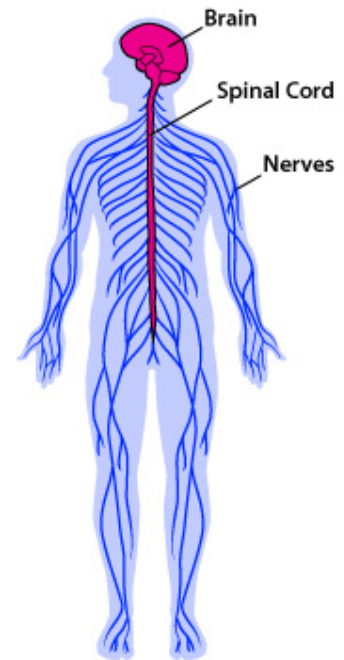
Peripheral Nervous System

Network of nerve tissue

Branches out from the brain and spinal cord

Communication Pathways; like the secondary roads

Consists of Somatic and Autonomic Nervous System



■ Central Nervous System (CNS)

■ Peripheral Nervous System (PNS)

Photo source: Arizona State University: Ask a Biologist

Somatic Nervous System

Receives sensory information about the world around you

Responds

Voluntary movement in relation to our muscular skeletal system

Autonomic Nervous System–Not controlled by conscious thought

Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS)

Like our body's gas pedal for exertion

Meant to mobilize us

A bracing for something or contracted state in the body and mind

Tension for exertion

Parasympathetic Nervous System (PSNS)

Like our body's brake pedal

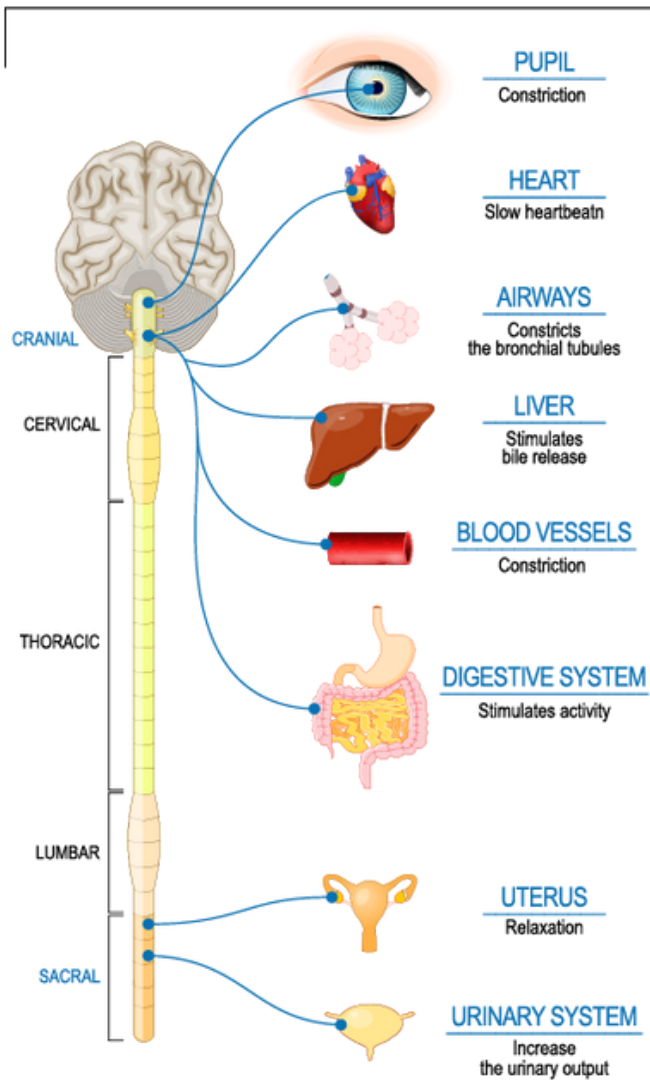
Meant to restore the tense and essential reactive responses in the body and mind

Works most effectively when the felt sense of task, fear, harm or threat is mitigated

The Nervous System Continued

This diagram demonstrates some of the key organs and functions that the PSNS and the SNS influence in an involuntary way. The nervous system informs all other systems in body, including our immune system, digestive system, respiratory system and cardiovascular system, to name just a few.

Parasympathetic



Sympathetic

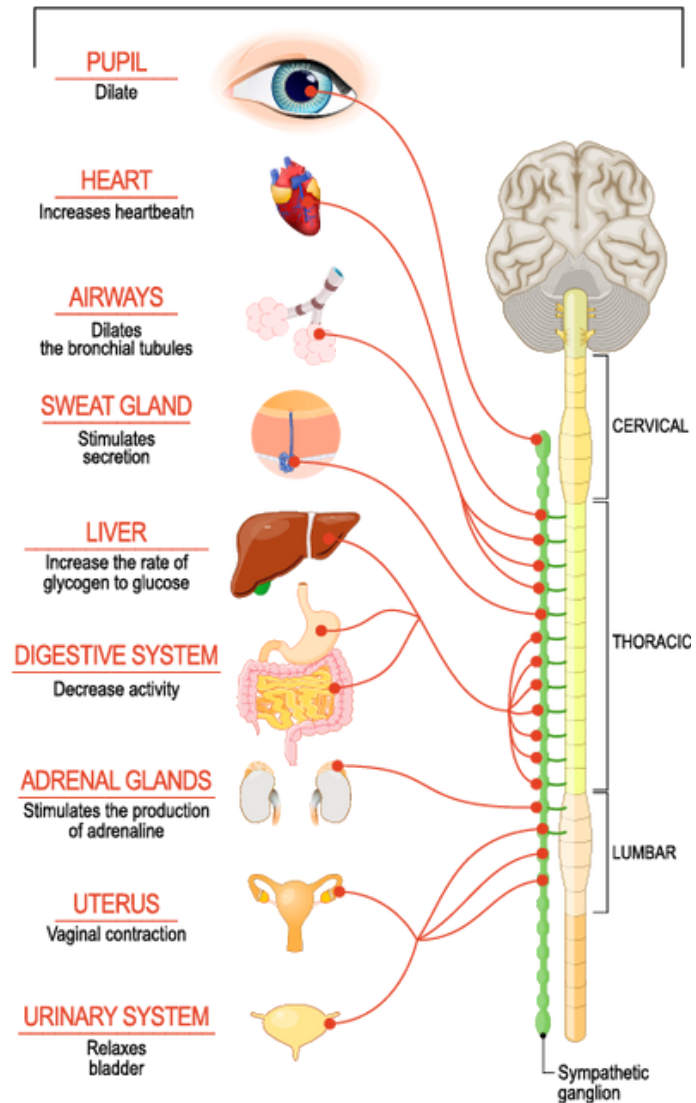


Photo Source: Imotions: An Introduction To The Sympathetic and Parasympathetic Nervous System:Roxanna Salim

Yoga and the Nervous System

When exploring yoga, it is important to acknowledge its roots and westernization of the practice. Its origins can be traced back to India some 5000 years ago. Its lineage is referenced in sacred texts called *The Rig Veda*, that were written in the language known as Sanskrit. Yoga is said to have been brought to the Western world in 1883, by Swami Vivekananda. There is a classical text that outlines the theory and practice of yoga, called the *Yoga Sutras*. A person named Patanjali contributed to the Sanskrit workings of the Sutras, including what is called the *8 limbs of yoga*. The 8 limbs conveys that there is more to the practice than just the physical part. The physical aspect of yoga, called "Asana", is considered to be limb 3 out of 8 Limbs of Yoga.



Photo Source: Integral Yoga Magazine: Ashtanga: The Eight Limbs in the Yoga Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita



Yoga and the Nervous System

Yoga is a practice of increasing one's sense of self-awareness and feeling connected and whole.

When our nervous system becomes overwhelmed due to acute or chronic stress, felt sense of threat, fear, oppression or shock, we may need help to move through survival mode. Survival mode could look like a heightened sense of living, where we are really anxious and always "on the move", to being irritable and not trusting many things, or completely shut down and not engaging with self or others. Survival mode could be a combination of all. These are biological, physiological and psychological responses to immense overwhelm and nervous system dysregulation.

Our body and mind can receive supports to shift from nervous system overwhelm and dysregulation to flexible regulation.

When we are able to nurture and access our rest and repair cycle, we are able to become aware, afford self-compassion and support our healing and growth. It is not enough to "know" this. One must feel safe and supported to do so, have the capacity to begin to receive help and have access to what they feel may be relative resources at the right time. The quality of our environment and how we are seen and treated absolutely matters.

Yoga is known to have the potential to bring forth many benefits to one's body and mind. Yoga can help us to live life from an aware, empowered and regulated state.

Through mindful breathing and movement, yoga helps to reduce the heightened functions of the SNS in the stress response played out in the body, while increasing the restorative functions of the PSNS for our rest and repair. To name a few examples, our heart rate slows, blood pressure drops, and digestion comes back on line.

Yoga helps to release contracted tension in the body and the mind and helps us to experience all ranges of emotions and states of being, while supporting our body and mind to complete the stress cycle.

If trauma is about separation, yoga is about union and a return to wholeness within our mind, body and spirit. When the body feels calm, the brain will sense safety and be able to make connections and vice versa.

What are some of the benefits of trauma-informed yoga (TIY) and how is it different?

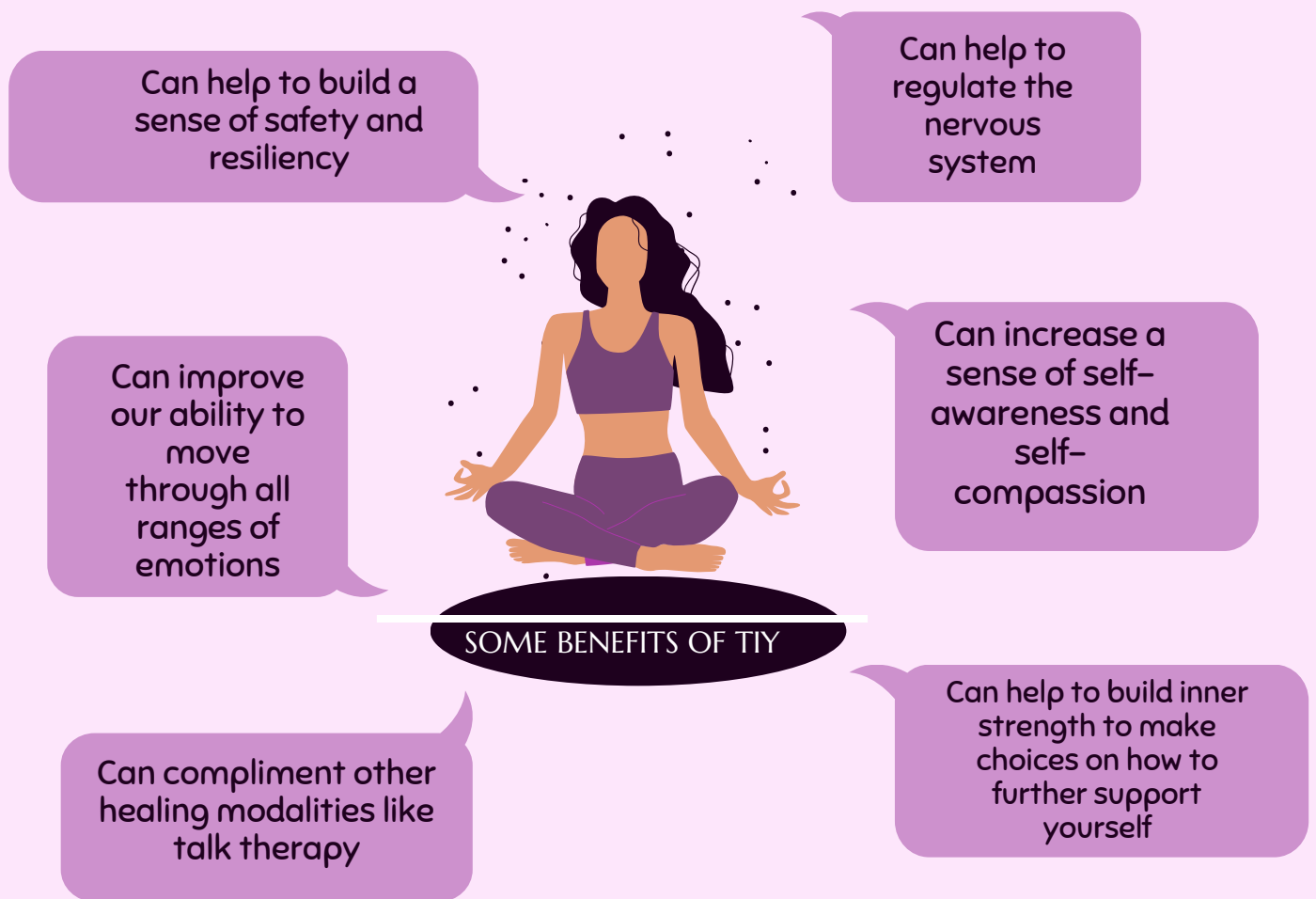
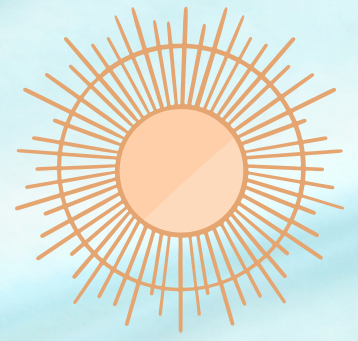


Photo Source: Canva images: paid subscription

TIY is like a special lens an instructor looks through that helps them understand what trauma is and how it impacts the mind and the body. It focuses on bringing emotional safety into the class environment, while valuing choice, transparency, collaboration, empowerment and taking into consideration the influence of cultural, historical and gender dynamics. The Instructor takes special consideration of factors such as using invitational and empowerment-based language, strategically taking care of room dynamics such as lighting, temperature and mat placement, having neutral space with respect to music and décor, having consented protocol around assists and an awareness of the potential energetic and physical experiences with yoga poses. TIY is a held space for someone to fully have their own experience, without any agenda from the Instructor on how that should look. TIY is especially designed to create an environment to help people return to a sense of safety, connection and wholeness.



I acknowledge your presence in this moment. If it aligns with you, you can explore the following exercise. If writing helps you to connect with your thoughts, you can record your answers on a separate piece of paper, or you may feel called to discuss it with a willing and able person who you feel safe with and trust. Or you may choose to sit silently with yourself and think about any or all of your answers. There are no right or wrong answers.

Questions

If it aligns with you, you can free write in point form, sentences or even draw a picture about what it means for you to be participating in *Raven Recorded Version*. Perhaps calling to mind an intention for yourself at the beginning of this journey, with full permission for it to shift and evolve. For some, it may be trying something that is new, being curious about what is possible, and/or for others, it may be to gain more resources or compassion for themselves. It could be to have an experience that belongs to you, where you have choice. it could be a single intention, or a combination of them. There is no right or wrong answers, only an expression of what you may or may not be sure of at this time.



The journey of learning about yourself is the beginning of all wisdom.

Check In

The check in is an opportunity for you to tune in and express what you are noticing in your body and/or mind before and after your yoga practice, along with an opportunity to review and incorporate affirmations. There is also an opportunity to express gratitude. You can choose how you want to relate to and/or participate in this exercise, as it can be a potential tool to help increase awareness to the experience of your physical yoga practice. There are no right or wrong answers.

What are you noticing before your practice? Are you holding tension anywhere in your body? Any other sensations? A looping thought or emotion?

What are you noticing after your practice? How does your body feel? Any shift in the quality of your thoughts or emotions you may be experiencing?

Is there anything that you feel grateful for in this moment?

AFFIRMATIONS

"I honor myself for showing up."

"I am not alone in this experience."

"I am free to make my own choices."

Tips and/or Tools



Just breathe

Our diaphragm, the dome-shaped muscle that sits in between the lower ribs, near our solar plexus, is significant in helping our lungs fill up and empty with breath. When we consciously breathe from this place, we gain VIP access in regulating the autonomic functions of our nervous system; like heart rate, and digestion. It helps us to bring our rest and repair system online, known as the parasympathetic nervous system, and down-regulates the spike in our stress response; the sympathetic nervous system.

How to Do Diaphragmatic Breathing (Deep Breathing)



- 1: Start with your hand over your heart and the other over your stomach
- 2: Breathe in through your nose and let the air fill your belly and notice how the hand on your belly moves while the one on your heart should stay still
- 3: Draw your belly button in towards your spine as you exhale through your mouth
- 4: Feel as the hand on your stomach retreats back
- 5: Repeat this three to five times to start



Safety

Sense of Safety and Our Nervous System

Window of Tolerance

Reflective Exercise

Check In

Tips and/or Tools

Sense of Safety and our Nervous System

There are structures in our brain responsible for sensing threat or danger in our environment. The Amygdala is constantly scanning our environment and is significant in attaching emotional meaning to things. It passes messages onto other areas of our brain, like the Hypothalamus, which wakes up our master hormonal gland, called the Pituitary. The Pituitary then releases stress hormones that gets our adrenal glands online to release cortisol. This activates our Sympathetic Nervous System survival responses; preparing us to fight, flee or freeze as a response to the threat.

Did you know that when our nervous system is overwhelmed and dysregulated, the prefrontal cortex doesn't function as efficiently, but our Amygdala ramps up? This contributes to feelings of anxiousness, high alert and maybe even agitation. In times of immense danger, we are not meant to think our way through. Our body is designed to instinctively react.

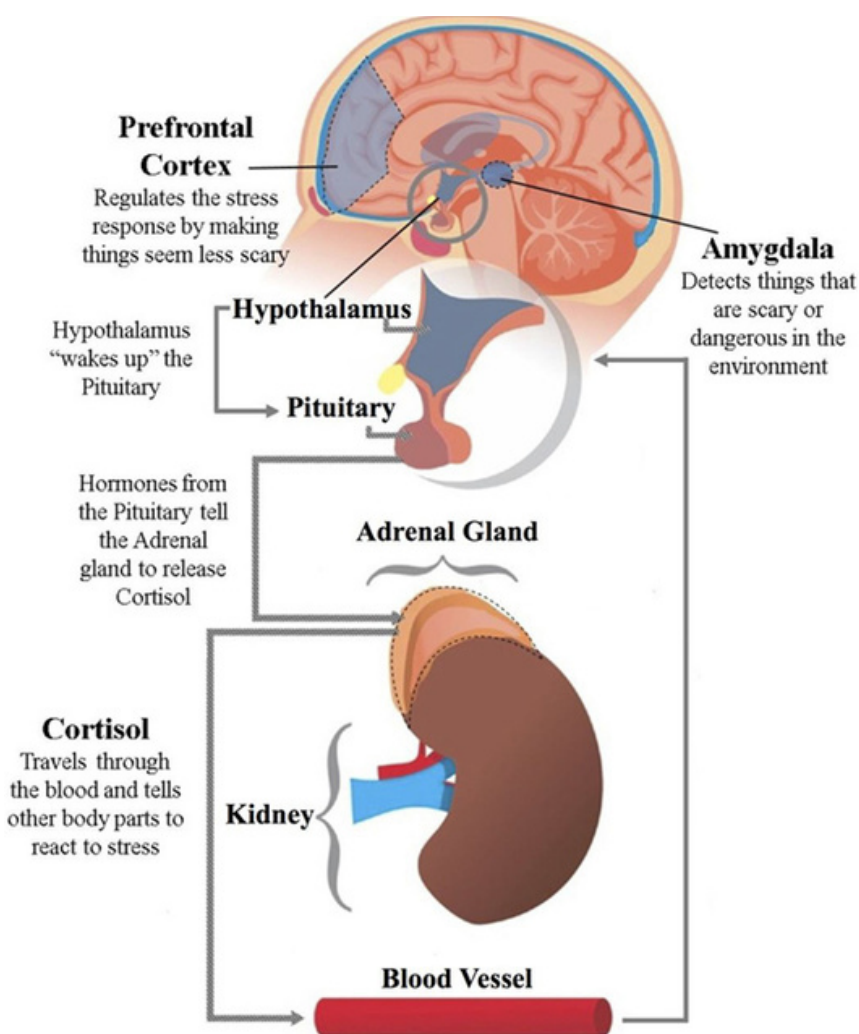


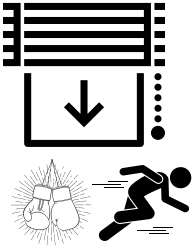
Photo Source: Frontiers: Have No Fear, the Brain is Here! How Your Brain Responds to Stress by Kylie Garber Bezdeck and Eva H. Tezler

Window of Tolerance (WOT)

Window of Tolerance (WOT) is a reference to the state of being where you feel safe, secure and supported enough to respond to people, places, things and dynamics in your life environment, while emotionally regulated. This doesn't mean you are always calm or never stressed. It means the ability to access and exercise conscious choice, while experiencing stress. Your nervous system is able to mobilize for a response, the stress or threat is addressed and then your nervous system is able to restore back to your sense of centre.

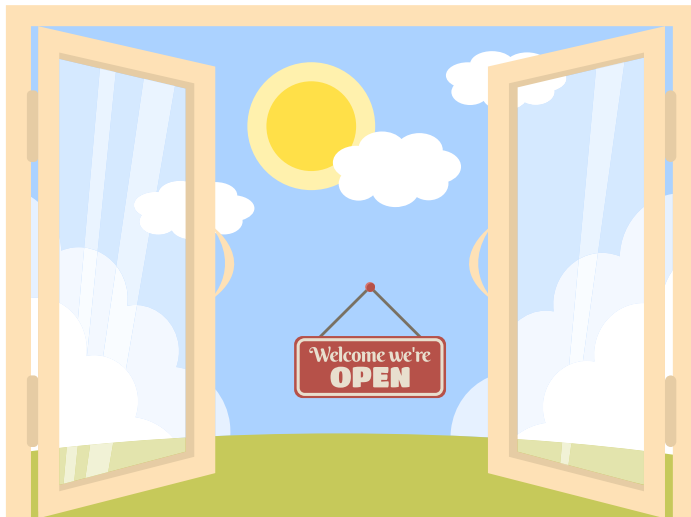
There are things we can do to help widen our WOT to help build resiliency and support emotional regulation. Yoga is one of those things!

Other things like grounding, physical exercise, mindfulness and access to what feels like the right resources at the right time can also help. Environment matters



HYPERAROUSAL

Unmitigated stress, fear, shock and/or trauma narrows your WOT and can push you into a stuck state of what is called "hyperarousal". This is the fight and/or flight stress response taking over in overdrive. It could feel like anxiousness, anger, overwhelm, out of control, quick reactions, startle easily, a need to know details, difficulty concentrating and/or making decisions and a more-often-than-not sense of uneasiness from a lack of trust. This may look like hypervigilance, boisterous and/or aggressive behaviour to those unaware of what is being played out in your nervous system.



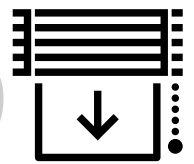
You may feel grounded, flexible, curious, connected, safe, able to move through different ranges of different emotions.

Before we get into hyper or hypo arousal, we may begin to feel signs of dysregulation. This could be irritability, frustration, spacey, zoned out.

Safe opportunities to learn about ourselves can help us to connect with safe enough people, places and things to help us to regulate and widen our WOT. This is how we build resiliency.

HYPOAROUSAL

Unmitigated stress, fear, shock and/or trauma narrows your WOT and can push you into a stuck state of what is called "hypo-arousal". This can also happen after a chronic state in hyperarousal. Your body and mind have shut down as a state of survival in response to what feels like extreme overwhelm. You may feel numb, completely checked-out, have a distorted sense of time, difficulty concentrating and/or making decisions and not want to connect with yourself or others. This may look like apathy, unmotivated or resistant behaviour to those unaware of what is being played out by your nervous system.



Freeze



I acknowledge your presence in this moment. If it aligns with you, you can explore the following exercise. If writing helps you to connect with your thoughts, you can record your answers on a separate piece of paper, or you may feel called to discuss it with a willing and able person who you feel safe with and trust. Or you may choose to sit silently with yourself and think about any or all of your answers. There are no right or wrong answers.

Questions

Are you aware of what safety feels like for you? Are you able to describe how you know you feel safe? What is happening in your body, your mind? What is happening outside of you in your environment? In relationships?

Are you aware of what you do or could do to help regulate your nervous system and widen your WOT?

A thing about G R I E F

Grief can be considered a response to a sense of loss. It is not only physical loss, or experiencing something unwanted. Grief could also be a sense of emotional, mental or spiritual loss from the absence of something that you felt attached to. Grief could also show up during your healing journey, as you develop new perspectives on acknowledging your past or present circumstances and creating new possibilities. Honoring your grief is a process and you are deserving of compassion and support while doing so.



The journey of learning about yourself is the beginning of all wisdom.

Check In

The check in is an opportunity for you to tune in and express what you are noticing in your body and/or mind before and after your yoga practice, along with an opportunity to review and incorporate affirmations. There is also an opportunity to express gratitude. You can choose how you want to relate to and/or participate in this exercise, as it can be a potential tool to help increase awareness to the experience of your physical yoga practice. There are no right or wrong answers.

What are you noticing before your practice? Are you holding tension anywhere in your body? Any other sensations? A looping thought or emotion?

What are you noticing after your practice? How does your body feel? Any shift in the quality of your thoughts or emotions you may be experiencing?

Is there anything that you feel grateful for in this moment?

AFFIRMATIONS

"I deserve to feel safe."

"I am safe. I am supported."

"I can sense when I feel safe."

MIND-BODY WELLNESS

With each hand placement, remember to... *INHALE* and *EXHALE*

5 Step Self-Holding Method

1. Place a hand on each side of your head.

2. Place a hand on your forehead and one on the back of your head.

3. Hand on forehead and hand on chest.

4. Hand on chest and hand on abdomen.

5. Hand on back of head and hand on abdomen





Self-Awareness

Self-awareness
Co-Regulation
Reflective Exercise
Check In
Tips and/or Tools

Self-Awareness

Photo Source: Thinkers 50 Blog: Leaders are Self-Aware



Self-awareness is the art of recognizing, exploring, examining and reflecting on our own feelings, thoughts, behaviours and characteristics. It is not just about learning *who we are*, it is also *unlearning who we are not*, based on versions of ourselves we once had to be. As we become more self-aware, we also learn *how* we show up and relate to people, places and things and about our strengths and challenges.

Learning your relationship with yourself helps you understand your relationships with others.

Self-aware work is one where we are asking ourselves curious questions like: “What am I noticing, where did I learn that from, what do I need in this moment?”

Self-awareness helps us:

- Be free from unchecked assumptions and biases
- Understand things from multiple perspectives
- Exercise discernment and make conscious choices from a responsive place
- Communicate with clarity and purpose
- Afford ourselves compassion
- Support our own self-advocacy
- Formulate our core values and contribute to healthy boundaries

You can increase self-awareness by:

- Participating in aligned opportunities for new experiences
- Paying attention to feelings, emotions, thought patterns and behaviours from a felt sense
- Self-reflecting on dynamics of lived experiences, while receiving support
- Engaging in mindfulness practices that include tuning into the wisdom of the body
- Pursuing your heart-felt interests and passions
- Engage in creative processes
- Have aligned space held for you to meet all the versions of yourself

Growth and protection can not happen at the same time. If our nervous system is dysregulated, then our protective strategies are at play.

Self-awareness becomes accessible from a regulated state of being.

Self-Awareness

Having space held for you to be witnessed, cared for and learn about how your lived experiences, thoughts, feelings and emotions shape your life, is important for self-awareness. You can also learn about your strengths and how to care for yourself and your potential.

Your aligned space holder:



Could be committed to and actively engaged in activities to help their own self-awareness

.....



Takes accountability for how they show up

.....



Could set healthy boundaries and gives you choice to express what feels right for you

.....



Could listen to truly understand what you are experiencing while being patient and calm

.....



Could empower you to use your voice, for yourself and follows your lead

.....



Could welcome the expression of feelings and moving through difficult conversations

.....



May not be attached to the outcome, or try to simply fix things for you, without considering your preferred needs

.....



Might ask if it is ok to ask questions, or present options and give you choice to consider

.....



Could take interest in what you would consider a warm, welcoming and safe environment

.....

Co-Regulation

Simply put, co-regulation happens when
*someone who is safe enough, and
connected enough serves as an anchor
to help a distressed and dysregulated
person move towards a sense of safety
and connection within themselves. Co-
regulation helps to build capacity to
move through experiences.



Co-regulation is considered a right-brain activity.
This works more with our emotional centres,
rather than our logical reasoning.



A sense of a safe enough person is subjective and will vary for each individual. It can be someone who presents as having a calm demeanor, soothing tone and pitch in their voice, softness in their eyes, are regulated in their breathing. These are some general characteristics of a safe and social mode.

*Did you know that you can co-regulate with something other than a safe enough person? You can do so with things like pets and nature, as long as it feels warm, inviting and calming for you to make a connection.

Having access to a healthy co-regulating partner can be key to help us out of protection or shut-down mode. It helps us to self-soothe, and be able to return to a state where we may be able to explore our feelings, emotions and thoughts and make conscious decisions about how to have our needs met.

It can help us to move through shame and feel compassion towards ourselves.



Reflective Exercise



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Questions

What does self-awareness mean to you?

Where in your life do you have space held for you?

Do you have anyone or anything in your life that you co-regulate with? Are you aware of how this helps you?



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Check In

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Is there anything that you feel grateful for in this moment?

AFFIRMATIONS

"I am grounded and supported."

"I explore turning the volume of my heart up."

"I am connected to my breath."



Ways to Ground

Grounding is a technique, skill or exercise that takes your focus from the past or future, and places you back into the present moment and into your body. These methods are helpful when there is no perceived threat or required immediate action to ensure a sense of safety.

Not every suggestion will resonate with every person, and this could change over time, and with different lived experiences.

As always, you have choice what to try on.

Feel free to make note of other ways you may already be grounding.

Spend time in nature; walk barefoot if you can

Pet a receptive animal; cats and dogs can be good for this

Connect with your breath

Arts and crafts, or another tactile activity

Move your body

Describe your surroundings



Values, Boundaries & Self-Compassion

Values & Boundaries

Self-Compassion

Reflective Exercise

Check In

Tips and/or Tools

Values and Boundaries

Values represent our sense of what we stand for and believe in. They can change as we change, or as things around us change. Values help us to form boundaries. **Boundaries** help us to honor ourselves and are a form of self-care. In order to become aware of what we value on our own terms, and be able to assert our boundaries, we need to feel like we have the ability to exercise choice without fear of irreparable loss or harm.

Some benefits of established core values and personal boundaries, along with the ability to choose to assert them without immense fear, may be...



An increased awareness to consider whether something really serves you



An increased sense of self-worth and/or self-compassion



An increased sense of self-respect, while asserting what is acceptable to you and your self-care



An improved sense of self-trust and self-confidence when communicating with others



An increase in time and space to rest and heal.



An increase in time and space to do things that you are really interested in



Inviting new people into your circle of support who reflect your whole self and hold your best interests



Self-compassion is the building block for personal transformation. It is when we are kind and caring towards ourselves, with patience and understanding.

This helps us realize we are worthy of love and support and helps us move through feelings like separation, loss and/or shame.

It feels nurturing and helps us to help ourselves.

It is very different from self-judgement.

Observing our struggles while curious about our inner critic. Consciously parenting that voice that tells us about ourselves, usually in a judgmental way, without internalizing it.

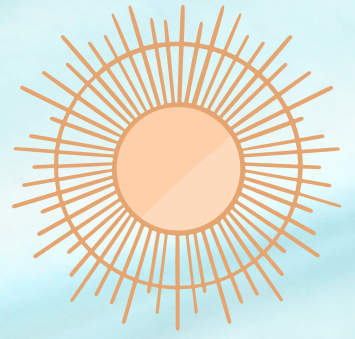
Taking care to be gentle with ourselves when we are having a difficult time. Being curious about what being patient towards ourselves might look like.



Taking care to be able to see our own humanity in the moment. This may feel like our own kindness, consideration, understanding or love directed towards ourselves.

Having safe enough space held for us to begin to realize we are not alone, so we may be able to feel connected. This may help to bring forth feelings of hope for another possible way.

Reflective Exercise



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Questions

Learning our core values and personal boundaries can feel a little overwhelming. Especially if we haven't had such modelled for us, or if we had boundaries crossed where a sense of trust was violated. It can take time to explore and discover our values and boundaries.

Have you ever considered what your values might be?

Have you ever considered what some of your personal boundaries might be?



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AFFIRMATIONS

"I honor my boundaries."

"I am allowed to take care of my energy."

"I offer myself patience and compassion"



Be gentle
with
yourself

How To Embody Self-Compassion In Your Daily Life

1. Practice self-kindness.
2. Honor how you feel & what you need.
3. Honor your process and progress.

Image Source: Canva Paid Subscription



Mind-Body Connection

Vagus Nerve and Mind-Body Connection

Polyvagal Ladder

Discernment

Reflective Exercise

Check In

Tips and/or Tools

The Vagus Nerve & Mind-Body Connection

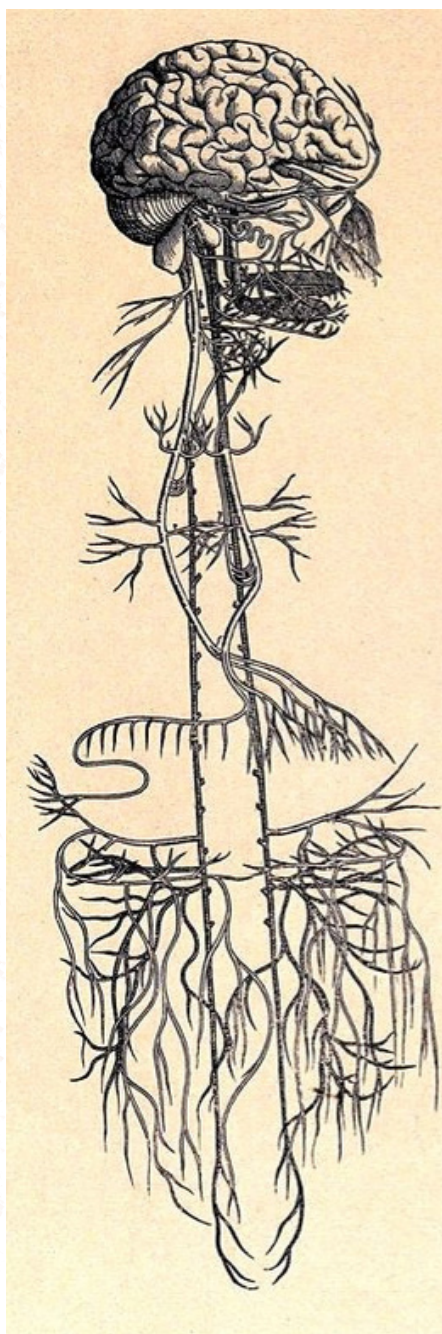
The Vagus nerve, as pictured below is the largest cranial nerve in our body; starting at the brain stem at the back of our head, connecting to nerves in our face, while branching down the the neck, thoracic cavity (chest), and into our gut (intestines).

Mind-Body Connection

The mind-body connection speaks to how our mental health and physical health are connected and influenced by one another. What we think and believe, the body will register and store that energy. This creates a sort of feedback loop between the body and the mind. This connection helps us to feel our emotions instead of just always thinking about them.

Our vagus nerve **innervates** (connects to with nerve fibers), major organs in our body like our lungs, heart, liver, spleen, stomach, pancreas, gallbladder, kidneys, and large and small intestine. It also serves important functions tied to our immune response, digestion, heart rate and our ability to restore, rest and repair. The vagus nerve is significant to our parasympathetic nervous system.

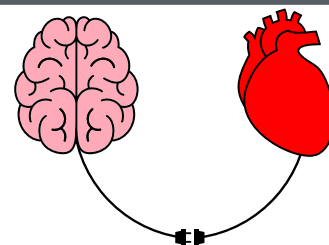
The vagus nerve is very significant in the **brain/gut or mind/body connection** and is associated with the saying "gut feelings", or what we may call "intuition". Our body sends 80% of information to the brain from the body, while the brain sends about 20% to the body. This is why body-based modalities such as yoga can bring healing without telling the story. Yoga works on the health of the Vagus Nerve.



Like our muscles, our vagus nerve has a tone to it. Things like fear, stress, shock and trauma can weaken our **vagal tone**. This means the condition of our vagal tone will have an impact on our organs and systems that it innervates. It is also impactful on our ability to access and process emotions, feel regulated, safe and connected.

There are ways to **strengthen the vagal tone** of the vagus nerve. When doing so, this increases our ability to access and foster feelings of safety, connection and growth and experiences all ranges of emotions. Some ways to do so are: Singing, exercise, laughing, breathwork, gargling or yoga, to name a few!

POLYVAGAL LADDER



The Polyvagal Ladder comes from polyvagal theory (PVT). PVT is a way of looking at the role the vagus nerve plays in our nervous system responses in relation to emotional regulation, social connection and fear responses. It could help us to understand our patterns of behaviour towards ourselves and in relationships with others. It can also help us to consider the mind-body connection.



Ventral Vagal Branch—Similar to being in our WOT

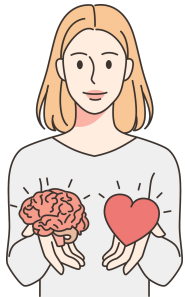
In this nervous system state, we are feeling safe, secure and social enough to make connections with ourselves and with others. This isn't about the absence of stress or uncomfortable emotions, it is more about feeling supported enough to move through experiences in the absence of immense threat. Here we feel free to make choices, try new things and take care of ourselves and others. Here we can move through all states of our nervous system.

Sympathetic—Similar to Hyperarousal

Our nervous system's autonomic response is to mobilize us to either fight or flee. Things can feel quite personal here, often with feelings of stress, agitation and tension.

Dorsal Vagal Branch—Similar to Hypoarousal

Shutdown state of being. May experience feeling disconnected, numb, depressed or "frozen". Could look like no motivation, apathy or lazy to some.



Discernment



1.

Discernment can be viewed as being able to make a decision from a place of wisdom. This comes from consideration of your values, boundaries and what would serve your core needs. What feels best for you based on what you may have learned from previous experiences and what you want to create for your present and your future.

Discernment carefully considers how something feels for you.

2.

It is very important to acknowledge that there are many factors that influence our ability to freely make decisions in an empowered sense, that impact our wellbeing and quality of life.

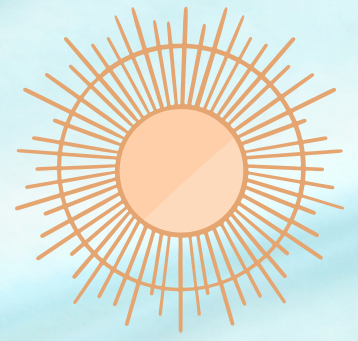
3.

Systemic oppression is created and actualized through institutions where policies, practices, attitudes and behaviours inhibit and harm groups of people. It is a means of power, control and exploitation over a population of people. It is an example of how trauma isn't just an individual experience. Any form of oppression, exploitation, prejudice or bias will disempower people's ability to be autonomous and free to make and exercise choice. In this context, choice is fought for. It is not treated as a basic human right.

4.

Safe social advocates, allies and co-regulation partners can help remove barriers that systemic oppression creates. Especially one's ability to freely exercise discernment & make empowered choices that impacts their quality of life, without fear of harm or irreparable loss.

Reflective Exercise



I acknowledge your presence in this moment. If it aligns with you, you can explore the following exercise. If writing helps you to connect with your thoughts, you can record your answers on a separate piece of paper, or you may feel called to discuss it with a willing and able person who you feel safe with and trust. Or you may choose to sit silently with yourself and think about any or all of your answers. There are no right or wrong answers.

Questions

Do you have any thoughts on what you may have learned about the vagus nerve and/or the mind-body connection?

Are you aware of any area in your life where you are able to freely make choices for yourself?

Are you connected to any people, places or things that you feel may help you to make free and empowered choices for yourself?



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Check In

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Is there anything that you feel grateful for in this moment?

AFFIRMATIONS

"I honor the layers of my diverse and unique lived experiences.."

"I compassionately listen to the needs of my body and mind ."

"I deserve to make decisions that take care of my core needs."

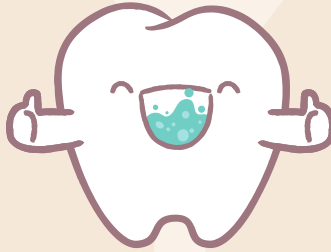
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WAYS TO STRENGTHEN your vagus nerve

1. Singing/Listening to Music/Humming



2. Gargling



3. Welcomed Social Connection



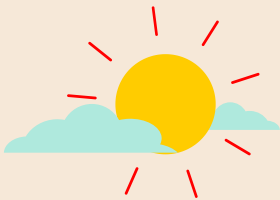
4. Diaphragmatic Breathing



5. Yawning



6. Sunlight Exposure



7. Mild to Moderate Exercise



8. Rest and Relaxation



9. Schedule time for meditation



10. Yoga





Self-Advocacy

Self-Advocacy and Empowered Choice

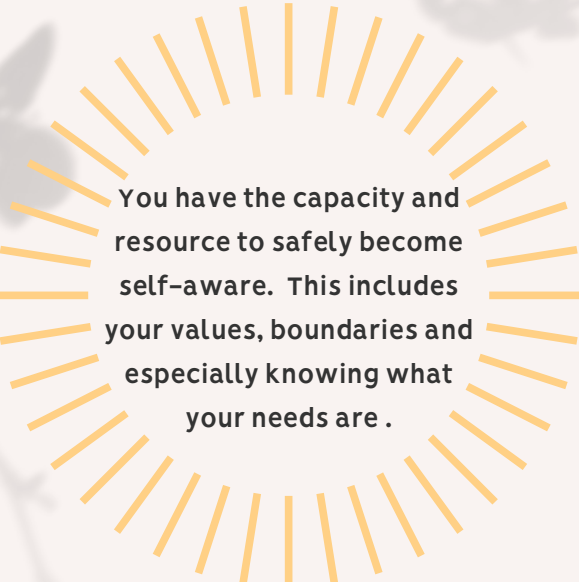
Reflective Exercise

Check In


Tips and/or Tools

SELF-ADVOCACY & EMPOWERED CHOICE


Self-Advocacy is an act of self-care. It can be really challenging to advocate for yourself. Especially if you do not feel safe and supported, or if there is fear of what will happen in doing so. This can be challenging with the people we feel have discretionary power over us. We need to have **safety** along for the experience and **choice**.



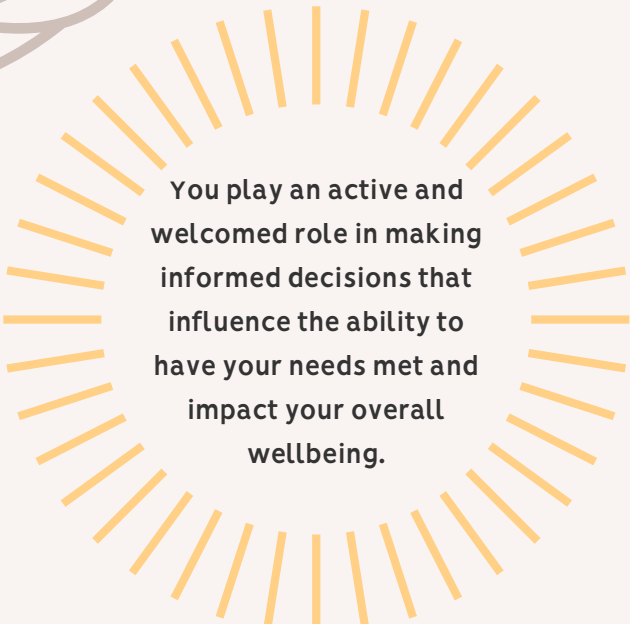
You have the capacity and resource to safely become self-aware. This includes your values, boundaries and especially knowing what your needs are .



You feel like you have aligned access to the right resources at the right time to support you to assert and articulate your needs and best interests.

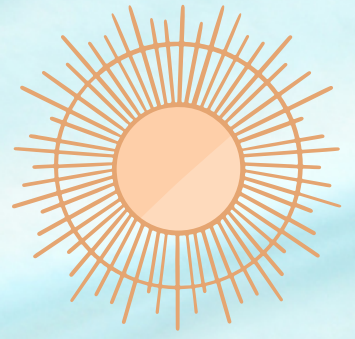


You are connected to your strengths and all of your humanity is cared for by others who have an impact on your wellbeing and outcomes.



You play an active and welcomed role in making informed decisions that influence the ability to have your needs met and impact your overall wellbeing.

Reflective Exercise



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Questions

Navigating systems and/or resources can be really challenging at times. Especially if we are already feeling exhausted, overwhelmed, alone, scared and disempowered from previous lived experiences. It is not impossible to grow capacity as a self-advocate. And we are deserving of aligned support to help us along the way.

Are you aware of what it feels like for you to feel empowered? What is happening (if and when so)?

If you can't readily recall a time in your life when you felt empowered, can you recall an example of a time when you may have observed another person in your life feeling so? What did you notice?

Are you aware of what you need from people, places and things in order to feel like you can articulate your needs?



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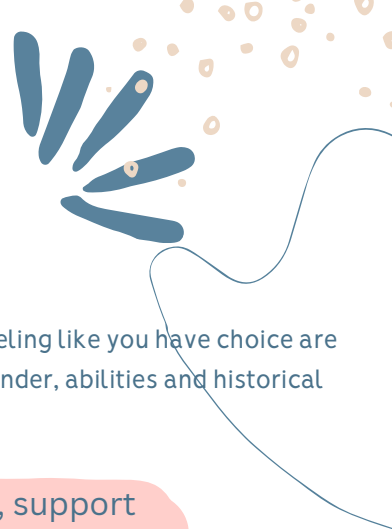
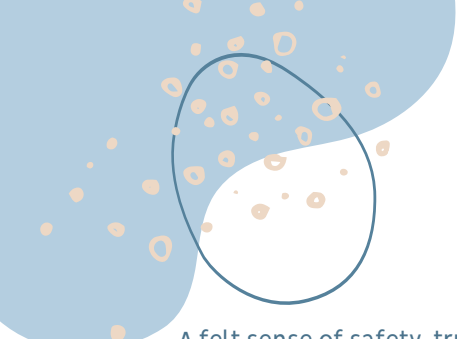
Is there anything that you feel grateful for in this moment?

AFFIRMATIONS

"I am not defined by my experience of trauma."

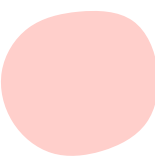
"I am worthy of asking for help and receiving loving support."

"I deserve to take in my own love."

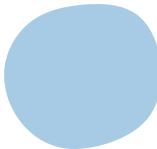


When thinking about navigating potential resources along your healing journey, you may find the following helpful to build capacity for yourself.

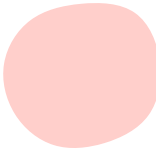
A felt sense of safety, trust & transparency, access to meaningful opportunity, as well as feeling like you have choice are important. It can also be important for support people to have an awareness of cultural, gender, abilities and historical issues. Otherwise, we can internalize an inability to build capacity as "our fault".



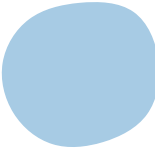
If it aligns with you, and a person of your choosing is available, support person(s) could help you navigate steps along your path. This may look like finding resources, or helping you make connections and/or decisions.



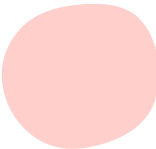
Perhaps if you have access to at least one safe-enough person that can help you use your voice or be your voice for you when you need that.



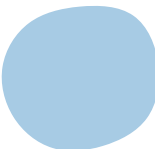
If it aligns with you, and a person of your choosing is available, you can ask if a support person could attend any or all appointments with you.




For some people, making a list of important points, information or questions that you would like to have discussed during any phone calls, emails or appointments may be helpful, so your brain has less to remember.



If it is important to you, it is ok to ask potential resources or significant parties along the way, what their experience is or awareness is in working with people that have similar experiences as yourself.



It may be helpful to learn if there are other people who have experienced a similar path you are on, and if possible, draw wisdom from their journey.



Either with yourself or with the help of an aligned ally, it could prove helpful for you to know your rights and also what options you have to exercise them, or assert them.



Honoring Growth

Cycle of Healing
Recognizing Growth
Importance of Rest
Reflective Exercise
Check In
Tips and/or Tools

Cycle of Healing

Healing is a universal concept, meaning it can be experienced by all. However, healing is also a unique and individual journey. There are so many factors that can shape a person's healing journey. Influencing factors could be things such as cultural beliefs, mental, emotional, physical or spiritual health, economic status, geography, or possible identity factors such as gender, ethnicity, race or abilities. Other influencing factors to one's healing journey can be previous lived experiences, power dynamics and access and opportunity to aligned support people and resources.

**Spirals and/or circles may have different meanings for people.
The following is one perspective to consider.**

Downward Spiral of Trauma



Here, you will notice at the top of the spiral, the circle is wide. This may represent living life from your wide open Window of Tolerance, or Ventral Vagal zone. Then a moment of impact occurs, and you may have moved into a state of overwhelming fear, stress, shock or trauma. The downward analogy here represents potential feelings of loss and disconnection with self, people, places and things. You will notice the bottom of the spiral is a contracted state where the width of the circle is small to represent the loss and disconnection.

Upward Spiral of Healing



Here, the journey begins at the bottom of the spiral, in that contracted state mentioned in the Downward Spiral of Trauma. You will notice as the spiral moves upward, the diameter of the circle expands and contracts. This represents the non-linear nature of healing, where we can sometimes feel like we are gaining momentum, but then we may feel or experience things or emotions that may indicate "a step-back". This contraction and expansion energy is not uncommon when experiencing growth. As we continue to move upward from the downward, life is actually getting more expansive. This isn't about a return to exactly what was, once upon a time. It can be about a deeper understanding of Self and more aligned connections with people, places and things.

recognizing growth



Like healing, indicators of personal growth are unique and yet also share commonalities. The previously mentioned factors that influence healing, can also influence growth.

Some signs of personal growth may be...

Your level of self-awareness about your thoughts, feelings & beliefs may be greater than once upon a time.

You may recognize that you are able to explore or experience things in a different capacity than before.

You may have gained a deeper awareness of things like your values & boundaries & are able to consider them.

You may have an increased ability to be aware and make choices about what feels safe enough for you.

You may feel like you are learning to trust yourself more when making decisions about your care.

You may be able to ask for help and explore receiving it.

Perhaps there is a shift in the people, places and things you spend time with, and they reflect your best interests.

You may feel a range of emotions such as grief and uncertainty. Sometimes growth can feel unpredictable and scary.

You may feel more tired than usual, as your nervous system comes out of your survival responses.

You may feel a deeper connection with yourself, nature or others, alongside of an increase in gratitude.

Growth and Protection can not happen at the same time.

Having aligned space held for your healing can help your nervous system shift to support a growth state. Did you know that trauma can change the brain, but so can healing? Our brain is able to change and reorganize itself alongside of the new learning and experiences we have.

This is called neuroplasticity. Yoga helps the process of neuroplasticity, as it has the potential to create new experiences where the body and mind may feel cared for.



The Importance of Rest

It takes a lot of energy for the body to be in survival responses. Rest can be considered an important part of our healing and wellbeing journey. It helps our nervous system, body and mind shift gears at transitional times of healing. It creates time and space for us to become aware, tune into, observe and integrate our experiences. Rest is how we repair and restore. It helps us get present to our thoughts, feelings and our needs. Rest helps make room for a new way of being.

Rest can be challenging to access, especially while experiencing oppression of any form, or other barriers. It can also feel really uncomfortable to our nervous system, especially if we have been in fight, flight or freeze mode for awhile. Rest can also be challenging to welcome, as living in a capitalistic society glorifies busyness. Be gentle with yourself as you explore ways you can bring rest into your life.

What feels like rest may be unique to each individual.

The following might be some ways you can rest, provided you have access and opportunity to do so...

LEAVE WHEN
YOU FEEL TIRED
OR READY

TAKE ALONE
TIME

DECLINE SOCIAL INVITES
WHEN YOU REALLY DON'T
WANT TO GO

DO AN ACTIVITY YOU
LIKE THAT YOU FIND
RELAXING

GIVE YOURSELF
COMPASSION AS YOU PRACTICE
NEW WAYS OF BEING

TAKE A BREAK
FROM MANDATORY TASKS THAT
FEEL OVERWHELMING OR
REWORK RESPONSIBILITIES
WHEN POSSIBLE

NOTICE THE
SENSATION OF
YOUR BREATH

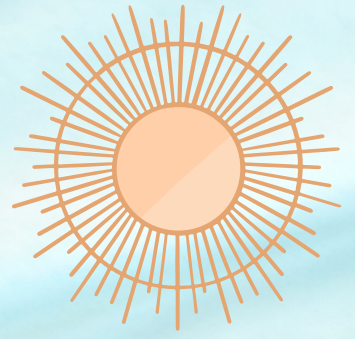
BE IN THE COMPANY
OF SAFE PEOPLE,
PLACES AND THINGS

DELEGATE
OR ASK
FOR HELP

NAP OR TRY
TO
GET RESTFUL
SLEEP



Reflective Exercise



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Questions

Are you aware of any of the ways that you feel you may have grown in your life?

What are your beliefs about rest?

What do you feel you need in your life in order to experience rest?

Are you aware of ways that you experience rest in your life?



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Is there anything that you feel grateful for in this moment?

WEEKLY AFFIRMATIONS

"I am my greatest resource."

"I am creating more space for me."

"When I intentionally choose rest, I know that I am healing."



Sleep Hygiene

Sleep hygiene is about creating rhythm and routine in habits and environment to support a restful sleep experience. This can be challenging to do when our nervous system is in survival mode, or due to circumstances beyond our control. Sleep hygiene can look differently to each person.

- ☐ *Establish a nighttime routine that includes relaxation.*
- ☐ *Try to start your routine around the same time each night.*
- ☐ *If possible, try not to go to bed just after you eat a heavy meal.*
- ☐ *If it feels safe enough, have a cool and dark room to sleep in.*
- ☐ *If possible, shut off all electronic screens like TV's.*
- ☐ *You may find "white noise" soothing. Like ocean waves, or a fan in the background.*
- ☐ *If you cant fall asleep, it may be helpful to get up out of bed for moment or so, and then return.*



Did you know that "legs up the wall" pose can help to bring our parasympathetic nervous system online, and promote healthy blood pressure, circulation, relieve back tension and support our sleep? If it feels ok, you could try it as part of your nighttime routine, You can start with a few minutes and work your way up!



Community & Connection

Community and Connection

Glimmers

Reflective Exercise

Check In

Tips and/or Tools

Community & Connection

Community can mean different things to different people. A community is not just about geography. It can also be a group of people, uniting for a common cause, or goal that share similar values, interests, attitudes and expression of such.

Aligned community helps to fulfill our core human need for social connection.



Aligned community helps us with our sense of identity.

Connection with our aligned community helps us to feel like we belong.

Connection to our aligned community helps us feel safe and supported enough to explore new things & grow.

A sense of a safe and aligned connection to community contributes to our overall sense of wellbeing.

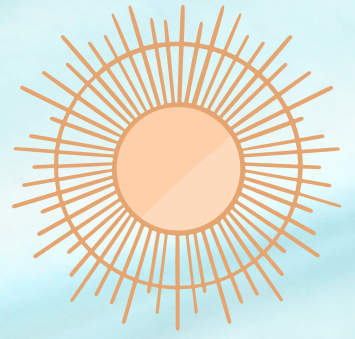


Glimmers...

- Can feel like little moments in time that shift our mood
- Are opposite of triggers & can support the process of neuroplasticity
- Help our nervous system to experience something other than threat
- Are experiences, interactions, or resources that helps us feel safe
- Can helps us feel a sense of hope and possibility
- Can help to nurture our sense of gratitude and overall wellbeing



Reflective Exercise



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Questions

What does community and connection mean to you?

Where at in your life do you have a healthy enough sense of community and/or connection?

Have you experienced glimmers in your life? What are some of them?



The journey of learning about yourself is the beginning of all wisdom.

Check In

The check in is an opportunity for you to tune in and express what you are noticing in your body and/or mind before and after your yoga practice, along with an opportunity to review and incorporate affirmations. There is also an opportunity to express gratitude. You can choose how you want to relate to and/or participate in this exercise, as it can be a potential tool to help increase awareness to the experience of your physical yoga practice. There are no right or wrong answers.

What are you noticing before your practice? Are you holding tension anywhere in your body? Any other sensations? A looping thought or emotion?

What are you noticing after your practice? How does your body feel? Any shift in the quality of your thoughts or emotions you may be experiencing?

Is there anything that you feel grateful for in this moment?

AFFIRMATIONS

"I create practices & routines that support my overall health."

"I deserve to be seen, heard and fully supported."

"I honor my courage. I have come so far."



Gratitude

Did you know that when we connect with moments where we genuinely feel grateful, our brain releases "feel good" chemicals (dopamine and serotonin) that are associated with feelings of happiness and overall wellbeing?

You don't need a list a mile long or extravagant examples (think glimmers), and it is ok to meet yourself where you are at in this ***practice***.

Some people like to end their day reflecting on what they were grateful for, while others simply take note in each moment as it rises.

There are gratitude apps on smart phones, others may journal with pen and paper, or keep a recording of what they are thankful for in a gratitude jar.





Closing Reflection

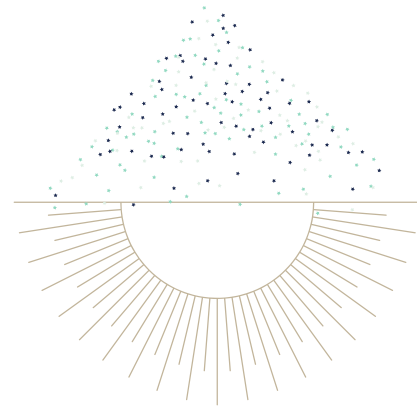
Endings and Beginnings
Acknowledgement

Endings and Beginnings

*Where there is an ending, there is a beginning.
This journey is a cycle that we move through, much like the spiral analogy
we explored earlier. The space in between is a transitional time.*

Part of the human experience is the cycle of a beginning and ending to things. It is partly how we keep organization and rhythm in our life and in society. Like keeping schedules. But other times, it is not so obvious.

Endings can bring up a number of emotions, thoughts and feelings; too many to capture here. In the context of your journey with *Raven Recorded Version*, perhaps this ending has a graduation feel to it, a sense of pride, or accomplishment. Or it may feel a little scrambled, unsure if you have grasped all that you have learned. Confusion often accompanies an ending where people are learning something that may shift their perspective or understanding of something. This is part of creating new ways. You may feel a little sad or grief with what may feel like another change at a time where you were just getting use to a rhythm and routine.



Beginnings can also bring forth a variety of thoughts, feelings and emotions and they may even feel conflicting to have. Preparing to experience something new can feel a little scary or unsettling to our nervous system, especially if it means change to anything that once was, or brings a sense of loss. Beginnings can also hold curiosity, anticipation or excitement.

One way to help us honor endings and beginnings is **ceremony, ritual or practices**. They don't have to be large scale events, they could be simple happenings that feel right and true to you. Ceremony, ritual or practices can vary within cultures across the globe.

Acknowledgement



I want to acknowledge your presence in this moment as well as every choice it took to help you to arrive here.

If it feels ok to you, I invite you to take a breath in, and then a breath out.

Part of our self-care when moving through experiences, especially healing ones, can be to acknowledge our journey. This can have similarities to others alongside of you, or it can also look rather unique. It will often reflect your personal experience, values, beliefs and traditions.

Some people acknowledge their journey through journaling, or serving oneself through an action like maybe a favorite activity, or engage in a practice that resonates with them. Others may share with someone they feel safe with.

However it looks, you are so worthy of being acknowledged, supported and/or celebrated.

I wish you much care and support as you continue along your path.

Thank you for your part in *Raven Recorded Version*.



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