

Understanding the role of the nervous system and how it impacts our physical bodies.

The nervous system has the ability to influence nearly every part and function of our body.

This includes our, sleep, energy, libido, digestion, detoxification, mood, stress and pain tolerance, metabolism, and immune system.

The role of the nervous system

Humans are wired for safety: that is the role of the autonomic nervous system, it is constantly on the lookout for our safety and well-being. The nervous system reads information in our internal and external world and communicates with us, if this is a safe space or not. It's also in charge of buffering stress, but when it is chronically activated this buffer wanes. During our lives we have accumulated multiple survival responses to daily life situations.

The more we work with nervous system regulation the more we can expand our capacity and diffuse old survival responses. Our intelligent and wise nervous system works the

same way as it did for our ancestors, except today it is giving us danger signals to mental and emotional stress, not just **saber toothed tigers**. When we focus on meeting all of our needs, we can rewire our nervous system.

In Maslow's hierarchy of needs the base of the pyramid is SAFETY AND SECURITY.

Remember our intelligent and wise nervous system is the same nervous system as our ancestors- who were constantly on the lookout for signs of famine, war, floods, drought etc... the difference is that they worked together as a team, as the village.

Our ancestors were buffered by the village, In today's busy life and social isolation - we are often fending for ourselves.

Our nervous systems are constantly on the lookout for our safety and well-being.

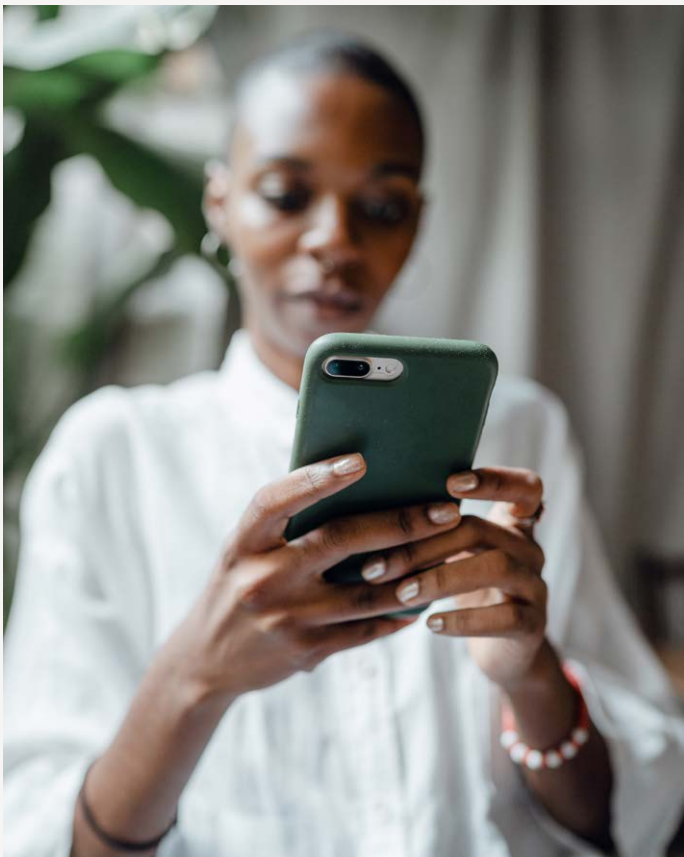
Remember that the nervous system can't differentiate between what is a real or a perceived threat, and this is why we are so easily triggered- because the way in which we live today (modern day practices - are actually being perceived as a threat to the body and nervous system).

When we stimulate the SYMPATHETIC part of the nervous system: we are telling our body that we need **MORE ENERGY-** and that the adrenal glands need to start releasing **ADRENALIN** and **CORTISOL** to help us get more energy into the cells.



WAYS IN WHICH WE SABOTAGE OUR SAFETY:

- ≈ Under eating
- ≈ Under nourishing
- ≈ Doom scrolling/watching the news
- ≈ Watching tv/spending time comparing ourselves to others on Social media
- ≈ Taking too many medications/supplements/health fad protocols
- ≈ Putting a time line on your healing
- ≈ Trying to go through healing yourself on your own
- ≈ Ignoring the cyclical essence of your feminine physiology
- ≈ Pushing though detox protocols when your body is not ready
- ≈ Seeking perfection
- ≈ Not allowing spaces of rest /recovery
- ≈ Identifying with a diagnosis



WHAT ELSE IS CONSIDERED IS A STRESSOR FOR OUR NERVOUS SYSTEM?

- ≈ Fluctuations in blood sugar
- ≈ dehydration
- ≈ Inflammation in the body
- ≈ Poor mineral status
- ≈ Poor nourishment and inadequate calories
- ≈ poor quality sleep
- ≈ medications
- ≈ feeling the need to rush, be on the go, the need to be productive all the time.
- ≈ disconnect from natural circadian rhythm / exposure to screens.
- ≈ too much information – information overload- without action.

If the nervous system doesn't feel safe it creates a whole cascade of chemical reactions in the body that affect our general well-being.

This is known as **METABOLIC ADAPTATION:**

The metabolism controls our Thyroid, supports hormone production, liver detoxification and the ability for the body to maintain a healthy weight.

Metabolic adaptation is when the metabolism regulates itself to conserve energy from the stress of:

- ≈ under eating
- ≈ over -exercising
- ≈ over working
- ≈ chronic illness
- ≈ restrictive living/
- ≈ toxin exposures
- ≈ unnatural lifestyles and rhythms
- ≈ childhood traumas

This regulation is an innate survival technique to keep you alive- it is telling your metabolism which controls the thyroid to slow down in order to keep you alive.



THIS MATERNAL PHASE OF OUR LIVES MAKES YOU VULNERABLE TO ADDED STRESS:

- ≈ Conception stress/miscarriage/hormonal intervention
- ≈ pregnancy
- ≈ Labour and birth
- ≈ Breastfeeding
- ≈ Caring for your new-borns
- ≈ Postpartum hormonal shifts
- ≈ Caring for your children
- ≈ Lack of sleep
- ≈ Juggle of working mums
- ≈ Illness in the home
- ≈ Family stress

Most women are stressed, most women have dysregulated nervous systems and most women have pushed their bodies into a space of metabolic adaptation.

Whether they are aware of it or not, but overtime and with constant pulls on our reserves and resources- the well will eventually dry up, this is why we are seeing so many women who are unwell, burnt out and experiencing the symptoms of metabolic adaptation:

- ≈ Unbalanced hormones
- ≈ Poor digestion
- ≈ Poor immunity
- ≈ Poor mental health
- ≈ Stressed, on edge, irritable.
- ≈ Tired
- ≈ No desire for life.

HOW STRESS PROGRESSES

Here is a chart showing how stress works in our bodies.

1. **People pleasing or fawning** is a protective state that happens when we are still in our regulated ventral wing of our parasympathetic nervous system. Here we try to create safety (from actual or perceived danger) through social interactions. If we feel uncomfortable with the people we are with we compromise our own needs to encourage them to elicit their friendliest expression to make us feel safer. If stress continues, we go into the sympathetic state.
2. **Fight flight** is the bodies response to imminent danger. Here we either fight the saber toothed tiger or we run from it. When we have this response to a mental or emotional situation rather than getting out of the way of an oncoming car, the stress response can't complete its cycle and return to ventral easily. Unless we work through our body we can walk around with high levels of adrenaline and cortisol that can't be diffused. This is what creates anxiety. Using somatic practices allows the stress response to complete and our nervous system to regulate. Eventually we can use these practices to prevent the full fight flight response to stress and we can regulate more and more easily. Doing intense movement such as creating fists, push ups against the wall or squats can help diffuse this state.
3. **Freeze** is a place that we go to when our body thinks we are about to die It literally numbs us out so we can't feel anything physically and emotionally. We can go to freeze easily if we experienced deeply threatening situations as a child or if we simply hit a point of absolute overwhelm as a mother. When we are in this state we can't make decisions, move forward in any way or deal with complex situations. When we are here too long we can sometimes experience depression. Coming out of this state needs to be a gentle process. Simplify everything. Be present for the sensation in your body while washing up, making food, having a shower, holding your child. Keep it simple and gently engaging with sensation.

Tools to support nervous system regulation

The aim of this work is to be able to **access safety within ourselves more and more**. This expands what we call “The Window of Capacity”. The more resources and adaptability we have, the more capacity we have to deal with the stressors of modern day living without going into a deep long term depletion or collapse. We literally build a strong foundation for ourselves and the ability to navigate the world without it impacting us negatively.

The nervous system can only align with your body and this present moment, or with your mind and the past.

It has to choose.

When we go into a state of worry, the mind pulls on past references and projects a possible negative outcome. When we come into the body it aligns with the safety of this present moment and turns off the protective mechanisms.

HOW TO SUPPORT THE NERVOUS SYSTEM:

Focus on what you are drawn to.

Our bodies hold so much wisdom, once we get our minds out of the way, our bodies start to tell us the truth.

LEAN INTO : “ how does this feel” vs how you THINK you should feel.

Create space in your day to evaluate your needs.

Rest and time out of work won't make you less important, instead it will make you value yourself more, which in term will make you feel more important.

Rest and time out won't make you irrelevant.

Trust that healing requires time and space.

≈ Do something that brings you joy

≈ Establish a routine

≈ Yoga

≈ Tapping

≈ Facia release

≈ Journal

≈ Meditation

≈ Breathwork

EVALUATE WHAT IS ADDING TO YOUR LIFE AND WHAT IS DRAINING YOUR LIFE:

≈ Work to simplify on all levels.

≈ Write a list of your current stressors and start to make simple shifts to change them.

≈ Having a plan will help you to change the mindset and create the change in your life.

Investing in rituals that have the most meaning for you is health-enhancing because you are putting mindfulness into practice and thereby living in the present moment.

PRIMACY AFFECT:

What you do in the morning has an amplified effect on your day.

How can you start your morning- to set up for the day.

Your subconscious pays attention to how you start your day.

Tiny things frequently: go to the loo when the call arises, drink mineral water, connect with partner, hugs, deep breaths, grounding.

Small things daily: walking, listening to music, podcast, journalling, take a nap, dance party, drink tea, yoga nidra

Big things weekly: massage, take a bath, yoga class, creativity, time with friends, gardening.

Bigger things once in a while: spa / retreat, weekend away, hike, wellness cleanse, learn new things.

A few of my favorite nervous system reset tools:

TAPPING:

Tapping is also known as EFT (emotional freedom technique), and is a useful tool for helping to detangle from negative thoughts and release stress.

Tapping is based on the combined principles of modern psychology and Chinese acupuncture.

HOW TO TAP:

1. Identify the issue causing you stress- this is the focal point while you are tapping. Focus on only one issue, fear, or problem at a time.
2. Evaluate the initial intensity, by assigning the issue a number on a scale of (0-10). This serves as a benchmark to compare progress after each round of tapping.
3. Create a phrase that explains what you are trying to address: there needs to be two main goals of the phrase

- Acknowledge the issue
 - Accepting yourself despite the problem.
 - Eg: even though I feel this anxiety over my health – I accept myself wholly
 - Even though I am anxious about my weight- I accept myself as I am now
 - Even though I am worried about my relationship with my partner- I honour my feelings and accept where I am now.
 - Even though I am feeling this anxiety within myself- I honour my feelings and give my body permission to relax.
 - Even though I have a worry over how I have restricted myself in the past – I honour myself now in this present moment and give myself permission to heal.
4. Follow the sequence of tapping – starting at the karate chop (hand point) and following on from
 - the top of the head
 - Eyebrow
 - side of the eye
 - under the eye
 - under the nose
 - chin
 - collar bone
 - under the arm

As you tap each point repeat your PHRASE

5. Do this sequence for 2 – 4 times
6. Evaluate how you feel on the scale of (0-10)
7. You can keep repeating this sequence until you have reached a level that feels safe in your nervous system to continue with your day.



BREATHING TECHNIQUES:

Breathe awareness techniques are simple to do, and create a profound sense of well-being in the physical body.

The energy of our nervous system is directly related to our breathing.

1. Box breathing

Inhale through the nostrils for a count of 4

Hold the breath in the body for a count of 4

Exhale the breath out the nostrils for a count of 4

Hold the breath out of the body for a count of 4

You can repeat this sequence 4 times- or until your body feels calm and able to continue with your day.

2. Alternate nostril breathing

Breathing in and out of alternate nostrils , calms and soothes the entire nervous system.

Start by sitting with a straight spine. Use the thumb and index finger of the right hand to make a U shape. The thumb closes off the right nostril, and the index finger will close off the left nostril.

Close the left nostril, inhale deeply through the right nostril, and exhale out of the left nostril.

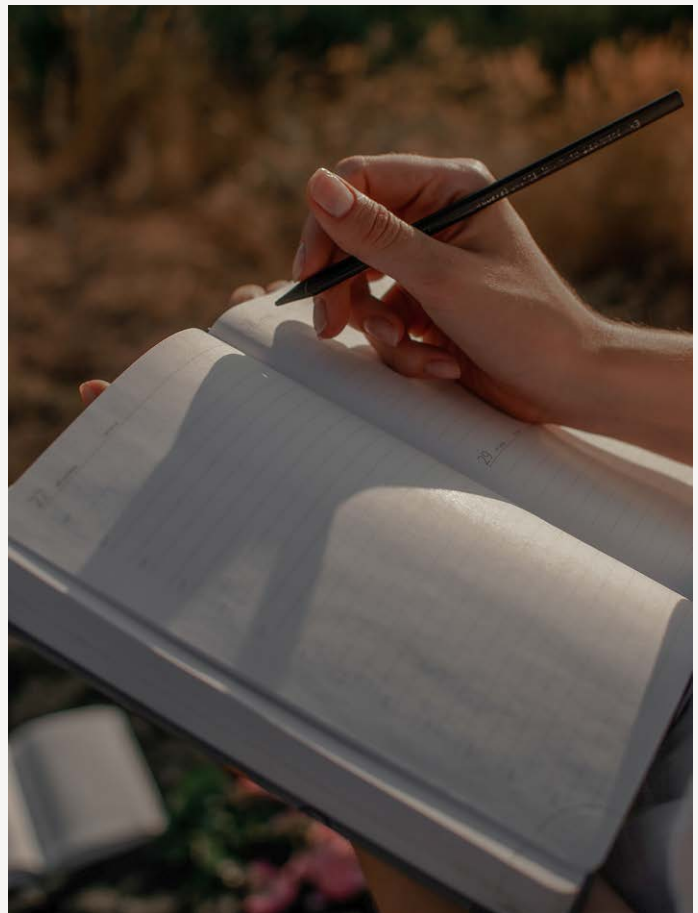
Then inhale through the left nostril, closing off the right, and exhaling through the right.

Then inhale through the right nostril, closing off the left, and then exhaling through the left nostril.

Make sure that the breath is full and complete on both sides.

Try this for 1 -2 minutes.

Once you have completed the alternate breathing- inhale completely through both nostrils , hold the breath within the body for a bit, and then exhale completely through both nostrils.



JOURNALLING:

Today I am grateful for:

Today I forgive myself for:

How have I cared for myself today?

Have I moved my body today?

Have I allowed for rest or nervous system resetting today?

Have I nourished myself today?

Have I hydrated myself today?

Have I found time to practice, small pockets of pleasure?

