

7 Steps For Finding Calm: Helping Your Nervous System Feel Safe

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A small graphic consisting of several stylized leaves in various colors (purple, blue, green, yellow) arranged in a cluster below the text.

Finding Calm: Helping your Nervous System Feel Safe

Sometimes, when we feel fear or stress, our body tries to protect us by setting off a series of alarms in our body. This is our body saying, “I don’t feel safe right now.”

This is important when there is a real threat, such as accidentally stepping into the road in front of a moving vehicle. But often our alarm system becomes overactive and you may feel somehow ‘out of balance’. This is called nervous system **dysregulation** and it means that we can lose connection with our internal selves, our own sense of balance, and we lose connection with others.

When we feel safe again, we can come back into balance, into nervous system **regulation**, which means we feel calmer, and we can make more grounded and balanced choices in how we respond to situations; how we reconnect with ourselves and reconnect with others.

What to do when you feel unsafe or disconnected:

- **Remember:** This is your body’s way of protecting you from something it thinks is a threat.
- **Know:** This is normal. Your nervous system is doing exactly what it’s meant to do.

How can you help your body feel safer?

The following 7 steps can help you go from feeling unsafe and disconnected, from yourself and those around you, to feeling calm, balanced and connected again. You may use one or many of the steps. Find what works for you and practice moving from surviving to thriving.

If you’d like a more indepth understanding of what’s happening in survival mode, this **9 minute video might be helpful**



With Warm Wishes

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1. Grounding

- Stand with your feet firmly on the ground and bring your attention to the sensations in your feet.
- Gently press your toes into the floor or into your footwear and notice how this feels.
- Begin walking slowly, deliberately. Feel the texture, pressure, and rhythm of each step as your feet make contact with the ground.



Why it works:

Helps bring your awareness into your body and the present moment, signalling safety to your nervous system and shifting you out of stress or overwhelm.

2. Orienting to the Environment

- Slowly look around the room or environment.
- Name (out loud or in your mind)

5 things you see

4 things you can touch

3 things you hear

2 things you can smell

1 thing you can taste

Let your gaze settle on something soothing or neutral.

Why it works:

This signals safety to your brain by engaging your senses, helping you shift from threat to safety.



3. Voo Sound (Vagal Toning via Vocalisation)

- Take a deep breath in through your nose.
- On the exhale, make a long, low-pitched “voooooo” sound (like a foghorn).
- Feel the vibration in your chest and throat.
- Repeat 3-5 times slowly.

Why it works:

The vagus nerve runs near the vocal cords and inner ear. Vibrations from humming or voicing activate it and help your body return to regulation.



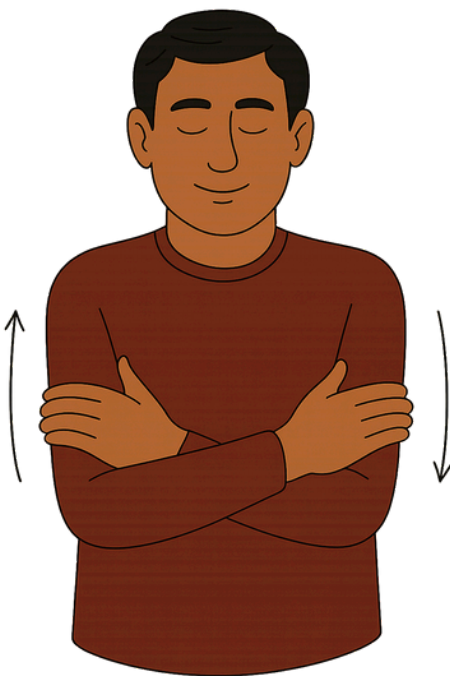
4. Butterfly Hug (Bilateral Stimulation)

- Cross your arms over your chest, so each hand rests on the opposite upper arm or shoulder.
- Either tap your arms alternately (left–right–left–right) in a slow, steady rhythm. Or Stroke your arms in a steady rhythm
- Breathe slowly and deeply while you do this for 1-2 minutes.

Why it works:

This engages both hemispheres of the brain and helps bring down emotional overwhelm.

Is often used in trauma therapy (like EMDR).



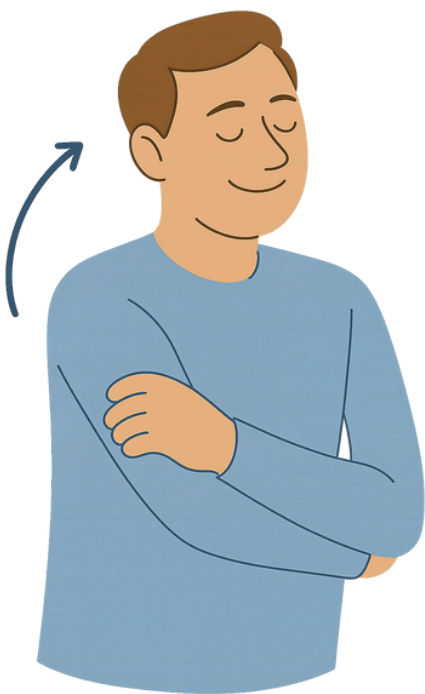
5. Micro-Movements

- Gently begin by moving one part of your body; e.g roll your shoulders, rotate your wrists, wiggle your toes.
- Tune into the sensations as you move: heat, tightness, flow, numbness; simply observe without judgment.
- Keep it slow and small. You're inviting your body to "come back online" at its own pace.

Why it works:

Trauma and stress often cause either overactivation or shutdown.

Micro-movements can safely reintroduce a sense of agency and presence in the body.



6. Rectangle Breathing

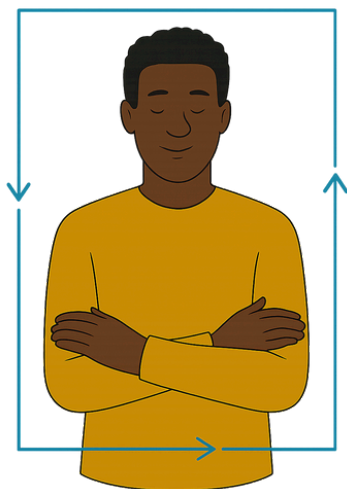
Imagine tracing the shape of a rectangle as you breathe:

- Inhale gently and slowly through your nose along the short side of the rectangle for a count of 5
- Exhale slowly through your mouth across the long side as you for a count of 7
- Inhale gently and slowly through your nose across the other short side for a count of 5
- Exhale slowly through your mouth across the other long side for a count of 7
- Repeat the cycle 4–6 times or for as long as feels good.

If imagining a rectangle is tricky, either trace with your eyes a real rectangle (like a doorway) or simply focus on the breath and counting

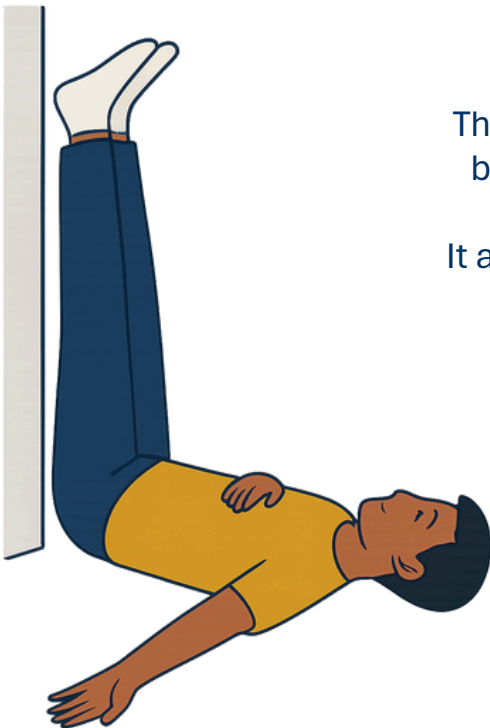
Why it works:

The extended exhale calms the body's stress response, sending signals of safety to the brain. It encourages your nervous system to shift from alert to at ease.



7. Legs on The Wall

- Lie on your back and gently lift your legs to rest them vertically against a wall or couch.
- Let your arms fall out to your sides or place one hand on your heart and one on your belly.
- Breathe slowly for 5–10 minutes, letting gravity do the work



Why it works:

This position signals to your body that it's safe to relax.

It also helps relieve physical symptoms like tension or dizziness related to dysregulation.

Handy Reference Guide

Take a photo of this page & store on your phone as a handy reminder for when you want to regulate your nervous system

2. Orientation



3. Voo Sound



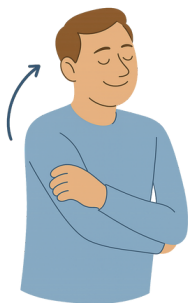
1. Grounding



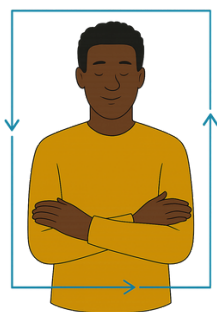
4. Butterfly Hug



5. Micro Movements



6. Rectangle Breathing



7. Legs on The Wall



Thank You...

... for taking the time to explore this guide. I hope it has offered you gentle and supportive ways to reconnect with yourself, your body, and your sense of safety. I trust that, in your own time, you'll continue building a deeper relationship with your nervous system, one that is grounded and self-compassionate.

Through my work as a Gestalt Relational Psychotherapist, I offer a space where your experience is met with curiosity, respect, and care. Together, we can explore the patterns, relationships, and stories that shape your world; not with judgment, but with an openness to what is emerging right now.

Gestalt therapy is about coming into fuller contact with your present experience, building awareness, and discovering new choices. It's not about fixing or pathologising, but about supporting you to meet yourself more authentically, with all the complexity and beauty that entails.

If you are curious about what therapy with me could look like, I invite you to visit my website and book a free consultation call or [follow this link](#) .

I look forward to meeting you, just as you are.