

HOW TO Soothe your Nervous System with your Senses



*A guide to sensory soothing
& nervous system regulation*

REBEKAH BALLAGH
JOURNEY TO WELLNESS



Introduction

In this booklet you'll learn about the states of your nervous system, how to check-in with your own state and discover powerful techniques for regulation using your senses.

You'll also get to discover which of **your** senses is most dominant.

There are a whopping 130 different sensory soothing ideas waiting for you ahead!

Whether you are a highly sensitive person, have sensory aversions or find yourself sensory seeking - or whether you're simply here to discover powerful regulation tools - you'll find a world of sensory wonder ahead in this booklet.

66 *When you learn to speak the language of your nervous system you will unlock a powerful connection with your body, your intuition & your emotions*

Sensory Stimulation



If you have ever...

... caught yourself pausing to close your eyes and deeply inhale as you pass blossoming flowers or a fresh pot of coffee brewing then you know the power of your sense of smell 🕸

... been mesmerised by watching a roaring fire, waves crashing in to shore or been soothed by the dim light of a salt lamp then you understand the power of your sense of sight 👁

... felt calmer after a massage, snuggling a hot water bottle or patting your pet then you know the power of your sense of touch 🖐

... intuitively rocked yourself back and forward or taken yourself off for a walk to cope with anxiety or stress, then you've experienced the power of movement 🚶

... felt zen when drinking a cup of tea or felt the satisfaction of munching on something crunchy then you'll know the power of your sense taste 🗨

... been moved by classical music, drifted off to the sound of the rain or felt your body relax listening to the sound of birdsong then you'll know the power of your sense of hearing 🗨

Lets explore the world of your senses...

About Me



I'm Becks - the founder of Journey to Wellness. I'm a qualified counsellor, somatic & wellness coach and 8 x best-selling author & illustrator.

I've combined 15+ years of training and experience in the mental health field and distilled all of the tools that have helped both me and thousands of others - you'll find them all inside Journey to Wellness.

But behind all that - I have also overcome anxiety, depression and panic attacks. I am an HSP (highly sensitive person) through and through, an empath and someone who used to get totally overloaded by sensory stimulation. I've been through traumas and developed a unique and powerful approach to healing that address the whole person.

Now I help people all around the world with my blended approach of top-down/cognitive models of therapy and bottom-up/somatic practices and interventions.

Members who have had chronic pain, anxiety symptoms, sleep issues and nervous system dysfunction report shifts after just one Release class. And even bigger strides are made when diving into all the included classes and courses with support from me and the community of like-minded beautiful humans inside membership.

I would love to welcome you to experience your own journey. Change is possible.

Becks

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01 The Nervous System

Your body hosts something called an autonomic nervous system; a complex system that regulates a whole host of unconscious bodily processes like your heartbeat, blood flow, digestion, breathing and more. The autonomic nervous system has two main branches: the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) and the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS).

Most people think of the SNS as the stress response — it's the mode you switch into when you're feeling anxious or threatened. This response triggers the release of your stress hormones (like cortisol and adrenalin) and gets things moving to keep you safe. The SNS is also all about movement and activation. In this state you might feel anxious, panicky, irritated, angry, rageful, stressed, and so on. It's normal to also have a bit of SNS activation just to get you going - to spur you on in your busy day.

The PNS acts like a handbrake, slowing down the responses of the SNS. It is your rest, digest, restore and repair system. The sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system work as a team, ramping you up and calming you down



The States of your Nervous System

Here are the states your nervous system is responsible for. (This fascinating explanation of humans comes from Dr Stephen Porges' Polyvagal Theory.)

Fight

Initiated by the SNS, this response springs your body into action ready to fight away any threats. You might recognise this as anger, irritation, or a good old-fashioned adult tantrum!

Flight

Also initiated by the SNS, this response gears your body for action by urging you to run away or avoid anything you find threatening. You might recognise this when you feel like avoiding something that makes you anxious, or when you feel like leaving in the middle of an event that's causing you a lot of stress or fear.

Freeze/ Dorsal Vagal

The second branch of our PNS, this primitive threat response is a form of shut down. This can occur if you've been stressed for too long or if you feel so afraid that your body shuts down to protect you. You might notice this if you feel depressed, stuck, flat, immobilised, unmotivated or disconnected and dislocated from your body and the present. It's common to drop into this more depressed state after a while if you're someone who experiences a lot of anxiety (after all, it's exhausting to be in an SNS state for too long). The freeze state can include some SNS activation also. Many people experience a freeze response if they have been through a traumatic event or series of events - unconsciously our body feels we can't possibly run or fight back and the only option for our survival is to freeze; to dissociate and go still.

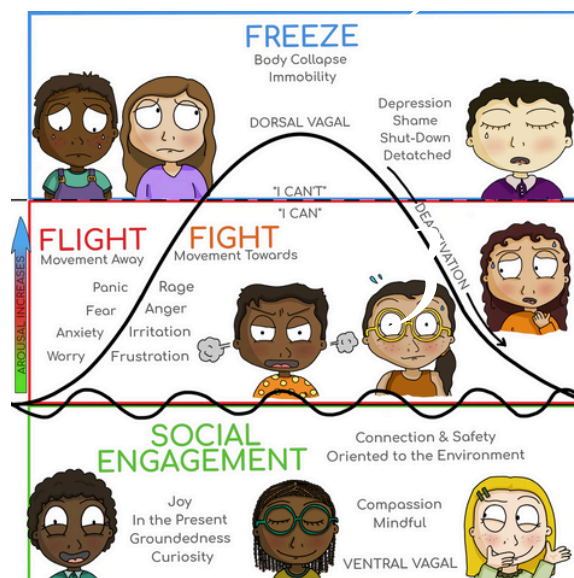
Fawn

A mixture of nervous system states, the fawn response is also called please and appease. You might notice this if you are a chronic people-pleaser, or someone who perhaps went through some trauma or emotional neglect during childhood where the only way to feel safe was to keep the people around you happy. You go into fawn response when you feel threatened and in order to cope you put on a brave face, try to keep everyone else around you happy and put aside your own needs and feelings. In this state you have activation of the SNS and freeze (dorsal vagal) response at the same time — it's like having your foot hard down on the accelerator of your car with the handbrake on at the same time. You also recruit your ventral vagal system in order to appear connected to people while using your smile and a calm expression.

Ventral Vagal

A PNS state of calm, joy, social connection, empathy, and feeling relaxed and at ease. From this place, you can access empathy, intimacy, compassion and reciprocity in relationships.

It is entirely normal to fluctuate between different states as your body responds to demand, stress and the needs of your environment.



02

Self- Check

When you can interpret the state of your nervous system you will be able to match the correct tool to regulate it

The scale on the next page is a subjective assessment that allows you to rate how you are feeling to determine which nervous system state you might be in.

This helps you to be better informed as to what it is you might need in order to shift you out of a place of stress or threat and into a place of calm — Do you need to bring some energy in and up-regulate your system or do you need to find some calm amongst the chaos and down-regulate your system? Let's find out...

Look at the scale and rate (from 0-10):

1. How do you feel in your body right now? Where would you place your level of energy along the scale?
2. How do you feel in your mind? What level of activity do your thoughts have along this scale?



0

5

10



BODY:

Tired, numb, wanting to lie down, slumping

MIND:

Slow, spacey, not present/dissociated

Dorsal Vagal

FEELS LIKE:

Stuck, unmotivated, down, flat, shame

NEEDS:

Up-regulation

BODY | MIND:

Just right
Calm
Present

**Ventral Vagal
(Parasympathetic
Nervous System)**

FEELS LIKE:

Calm, socially connected, relaxed, resilient, creative, present

BODY:

Tense, panicky, fidgeting, can't sit still, jittery

MIND:

Racing, incoherent, ruminating, panicky, illogical

**Sympathetic
Nervous System**

FEELS LIKE:

Anxiety, stress, panic, anger, irritability, defensive, overworking

NEEDS:

Down-regulation



Please note:

You can be in a mixed state - where you feel stuck & sluggish AND anxious/stressed.

If you find yourself moving between freeze & sympathetic often you may have unprocessed stress/trauma in your system.

To work with & heal these experiences see the 'next steps' section



03

Soothing with the senses

“

When it comes to regulating your nervous system and feeling safe - 80% of the communication moves from your body up to your mind.

Matching your tool: up- regulation or down- regulation

You can help regulate your nervous system out of a threat response state and back into a place of calm (ventral vagal activation). Your body is good at returning to a baseline level of regulation on its own, but we can assist it to do this and sometimes it needs extra support if it has gotten stuck in a pattern of being dysregulated - i.e. anxious or stressed often.

There are many ways that are

effective at helping you relax and find a sense of calm. In this resource we are looking at ways you can do that using your senses — Some of the more direct and most effective ways to activate your vagus nerve and return you to your parasympathetic nervous system are listed below with a star beside them ★

Next you will find an extensive list of ideas to soothe & regulate your nervous system. Most of the ideas are calming — some are stimulating, or can be done in a way that brings more energy in.

- ✓ Tools that up-regulate — These bring energy in to your nervous system. They might make you feel more awake or more 'activated'. If you find yourself in more of a dorsal vagal response then tools that up-regulate you will be useful. So if you notice yourself feeling slumped, tired, unmotivated, stuck, down or flat then these are for you.
- ✓ Tools that down-regulate — These help to calm high energy and return you to a place of feeling more at peace and calm. If you find yourself in more of a sympathetic nervous system response then tools that down-regulate you will be useful. (A note; you may want to 'discharge' the sympathetic energy first to 'complete the stress cycle'. You can do this by shaking, jumping, pushing a wall, stomping etc first and then trying a more soothing, slow practice). Down-regulation will help soothe and calm you when you when you're feeling anxious, stressed, overwhelmed, on edge, panicky or angry.



When it comes to regulating your nervous system and feeling safe - 80% of the communication moves from your body up to your mind. Your brain is taking cues from your physical experience and what's going on inside your body to help it decide if you are safe or under threat.

Therefore, there is only so much we can do with our thoughts. You can't entirely think your way to feeling safe. You need to use your body to influence feelings of anxiety, stress, stuck-ness etc to help you switch and regulate the state of your nervous system.

Your senses are a powerful way to use your body and somatic experience to communicate a sense of safety and to help you get calm and grounded.

04 Your Dominant Sense

Time to discover which of your senses is most dominant / your preferred sense. There is no right or wrong here, and this may change over time too.

The lists below will help you discover some new sensory ideas to regulate your nervous system and also to find out which of your senses might work the best for you in order to do this.

How to:

Below you will see 6 boxes containing a list of sensory soothing ideas. They are grouped into sensory categories:

- Sight
- Smell
- Touch
- Taste
- Sound
- Movement

Read through the lists below and put a check next to the ones that either:

- You already do and find effective in helping you regulate your nervous system (this might mean calming you or energising you)
- You think that you might like to try

You could also put an arrow, ↑ or ↓, indicating if this tool helps to bring energy in (up-regulate) or calm you down (down-regulate) or maybe it can be both depending on how you use it

At the end you can go back through and count how many ticks you have for each sense. This will help you see which of your senses is more dominant/preferred and therefore may be more effective in helping to regulate you and your nervous system.

(i.e. the sense with the most ticks is your more dominant sense, and probably most effective sense in helping regulate you).

Sight

- Looking at a sunset or sunrise
- Watching TV/movies
- Looking at the ocean
- Looking at plants & nature
- Colourful lights
- Bright lights
- Dim lighting
- Looking at artwork
- Drawing
- Kaleidoscope
- Watching a fire/flickering flames
- Reading
- Doing a puzzle
- Wearing sunglasses
- Painting
- Closing your eyes
- Look at photos
- Doodling
- Snow globes / glitter jars
- Lava lamp/ salt lamp
- Sudoku
- Watching a candle burning

Smell

- Uplifting essential oils (like peppermint)
- Soothing essential oils (like lavender)
- Cut grass
- Perfume
- Fresh brewed coffee
- Fresh laundry / washing
- Herbal tea
- Food cooking
- Smell of nature
- Pets fur
- Body wash in the shower
- Using scented pens
- Scented candles
- Body lotion
- Flowers
- Shampoo'd hair

Touch

- Fluffy clothes
- Snuggly blankets
- Soft / fluffy / fresh sheets
- Smooth textures
- Rough or bumpy textures
- Silk
- Burrito wrap
- Warm bath / spa
- Cold water ★
- Hot water bottle / wheat bag
- Hand on heart
- Push against a wall
- Sitting in a beanbag
- Eye mask
- Deep pressure squeezes
- Weighted blanket
- Tapping down arms or on thighs
- Butterfly taps
- Ice on neck/face ★
- Fidget toys
- Hug/self-hug
- Cuddling a toy
- Petting an animal
- Get a massage
- Self-Massage
- Foam roller
- Brush / play with your hair
- Modelling with clay
- Stress balls
- Loose clothes
- Tight or compression clothes
- Shower
- Light touch / strokes (
- Wheat bags on palms of hands
- PMR/IMR
- Vagal massage (ears, neck etc) ★
- Warm or cold cloth on eyes/face

Sound

- Calming music
- Upbeat music
- Singing
- Talking to someone
- Humming ★
- Music through headphones
- Noise cancelling headphones
- Silence
- Chanting (i.e. 'om' or 'voo') ★
- Audiobooks
- Podcasts
- Sound machine
- White / brown / green noise
- Sound of deep breaths
- Listening to a heartbeat
- Sounds of nature
- Sounds of the ocean

Taste

- Chewy food
- Sour food
- Sweet food
- Savoury food
- Crunchy texture
- Smooth texture
- Eating peppermints
- Spicy food
- Chewing/sucking ice
- Fresh flavours
- Drinking tea or coffee
- Drinking through a straw
- Hard candy
- Chewing gum

Movement

- Swinging on a swing
- Swaying side to side
- Running
- Walking
- Jumping
- Skipping
- Yoga ★
- Stretching
- Lifting weights
- Shaking
- Swimming
- Resistance bands
- Throwing / kicking a ball
- Deep breathing ★
- Vibration
- Rubbing feet back & forth on floor
- Rocking in a rocking chair
- Stretching
- Spinning / twirling
- Punching bag
- Dance
- Gargling ★

Your Summary

My most dominant/preferred sense is (most number of ticks/#1):

The order of my other senses according to preference/dominance (number of ticks):

#2:

#3:

#4:

#5:

#6:

Other ideas that work for me:

Sight

Taste

Smell

Sound

Touch

Movement



05

Sensory Regulation & Vagal Drills

SENSORY SOOTHING

SOUND

- Calming music
- Upbeat music
- Singing
- Talking to someone
- Humming
- Music through headphones
- Noise cancelling headphones or ear muffs
- Silence
- Sounds of nature
- Sounds of the ocean
- Audiobooks
- Podcasts
- Sound machine
- White noise / brown noise / green noise
- Sound of deep breaths
- Listening to a heartbeat



TASTE

- Chewy food
- Sour food
- Sweet food
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- Crunchy texture
- Smooth texture
- Eating peppermints
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- Fresh flavours
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MOVEMENT

- Swinging on a swing
- Swaying side to side
- Running
- Walking
- Jumping
- Skipping
- Yoga
- Stretching
- Lifting weights
- Shaking
- Swimming
- Resistance bands
- Throwing / kicking a ball
- Deep breathing
- Vibration
- Balance board
- Rocking on a rocking chair
- Climbing
- Spinning / twirling
- Crawling
- Punching bag
- Dance
- Gargling



TOUCH

- Fluffy clothes
- Snuggly blankets
- Soft sheets
- Smooth textures
- Rough or bumpy textures
- Silk
- Burrito wrap
- Warm bath / spa
- Cold water (shower or face dunk)
- Hot water bottle / wheat bag
- Hand on heart
- Push against a wall
- Sitting in a beanbag
- Eye masks
- Deep pressure squeezes
- Weighted blanket
- Fidget toys
- Hugs
- Cuddling a toy
- Petting an animal
- Get a massage
- Massage in moisturiser / lotion
- Foam roller
- Brush / play with your hair
- Modelling with clay
- Stress balls
- Loose clothes
- Tight or compression clothes
- Shower
- Light touch / strokes
- Brushing arms / chest / face
- Warm or cold cloth on eyes/face



SMELL

- Uplifting essential oils (like peppermint)
- Soothing essential oils (like lavender)
- Cut grass
- Perfume
- Coffee brewing
- Fresh laundry / washing
- Herbal tea
- Food cooking
- Flowers
- Shampoo'd hair
- Pets fur
- Body wash in the shower
- Using scented pens
- Scented candles
- Body lotion

SIGHT

- Looking at a sunset or sunrise
- Watching TV/ movies
- Looking at the ocean
- Looking at plants & nature
- Colourful lights
- Bright lights
- Dim lighting
- Artwork
- Drawing
- Kaleidoscope
- Reading
- Doing a puzzle
- Wearing sunglasses
- Painting
- Close your eyes
- Look at photos
- Doodling
- Snow globes / glitter jars
- Lava lamp
- Sudoku



ACTIVATING THE VENTRAL VAGAL STATE & TONING YOUR VAGUS NERVE

As you read about earlier, when you are in your ventral vagal state you are able to feel calm, socially connected, and more resilient. It's normal to move between nervous system states throughout the day, or to be in mixed states. Often we need a bit of sympathetic input to give us some mobilisation and energy and to get things done. And a bit of dorsal vagal (immobilisation) combined with ventral vagal (safety) allows us to be intimate with loved ones or to relax for bed at night. Sometimes however, we can spend too much time in a state of stress, anxiety or shut down.

Our nervous systems may reflexively (unconsciously) begin to respond to our environments and stressors by reverting to threat responses. When you have been through trauma, chronic stress or prolonged sympathetic/dorsal vagal activation your nervous system can rewire to respond from these places more and more often. This can change your 'baseline', making your nervous system more likely to respond from a dysregulated state. Your nervous system decides that whatever threat it has been through in the past, and whatever mechanisms it needed to adopt to keep you safe are likely going to be what is needed in the present and for your future too.

Your vagus nerve is your 10th cranial nerve, and is the main component of your parasympathetic nervous system - It wanders throughout many areas of your body, innervating a number of your internal organs and structures, such as your ear, your throat, lungs, heart, diaphragm and digestive system. It helps your body switch between your sympathetic nervous system and your parasympathetic nervous system, moving you back and forth between fight/flight mode and a parasympathetic state where you are more open, present and relaxed. When your vagus nerve is activated it helps to slow your heart rate, your breathing and it controls other unconscious body functions like digestion and your immune system. It acts like a brake, slowing down or turning off your sympathetic nervous system, stress response and mobilisation system.

When your vagus nerve lacks tone or doesn't function it means you'll find it harder to bounce back from times of stress. This can happen due to chronic stress/anxiety or trauma for example. You might also notice other symptoms of dysfunction like long-term fatigue, inflammation, headaches and digestive issues for example.

Activating your vagus nerve is a body-up approach to help you feel calm and regulated.

The more you use tools that help activate your vagus nerve the more you will tone it and increase your capacity for calm and resilience. When you find a tool that works for you/that you like - repeat it daily.

11 ways to activate your vagus nerve

- ✓ Diaphragmatic/belly breathing
- ✓ Humming and singing
- ✓ Gargling
- ✓ Cold exposure (like cold water blasts at the end of your shower or dunking your face in cold water)
- ✓ Yoga
- ✓ Massage (certain spots like in your ear or down your neck - google it!)
- ✓ Chanting 'om' or 'voo'
- ✓ Laughing (watch a funny laugh-out-loud movie or chat with a friend who you laugh with)
- ✓ Meditation
- ✓ Massage (there is a spot in your ear or gently down the sides of your neck - google it)
- ✓ Eye movement - lie on your back with your hands behind your head. Keeping your face straight ahead looking at the roof move just your eyes to the left. Look left for 30 seconds or until you sigh, swallow or yawn then look right for 30 seconds until you have that sign of parasympathetic activation (the sigh or swallow etc).

06

Next Steps

If you are an HSP, empath or someone who resonates with nervous system deregulation you NEED to learn the tools to manage the over-stimulation and dysregulation.

I have courses developed that combine over 15 years of my expertise to help you do just that.



Courses
(click here)

My top recommendations to help you regulate your nervous system & learn new coping tools:

1. Soma & Soul (30 days of somatic practices)
2. Highly Sensitive Superpower
3. The Trauma Toolbox
4. Get Grounded
5. Nervous System Deep Dive

Membership

My membership includes all the above courses & more plus you'll be guided by me for personalised healing

Membership

Benefits:

- ✓ 20 + Courses (valued at over \$1700)
- ✓ Monthly Somatic Release class (valued at \$22)
- ✓ Masterclasses every month & guest expert speakers (Valued at \$19-\$49)
- ✓ A library of with hundred of bite-sized tools; videos, workbooks & more
- ✓ Meditation library
- ✓ Members hub + access to guidance from me (priceless!!)
- ✓ Monthly group coaching (membership plus tier) (valued at \$100)
- ✓ Monthly Nourish Class (membership plus tier) (valued at \$22)
- ✓ Random freebies & benefits!

All from \$49nzd/month (\$30usd/month)!



To unlock a journey to profound healing & nervous system regulation while creating a life sprinkled with joy. presense & self-compassion...

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hello@journeytowellness.online
www.journeytowellness.online