

Mark Cool's Nervous System Regulation Guide

Hello! I'm an ADD brain who was diagnosed with general anxiety and I was experiencing panic disorder just 18 months ago.

Since then, I have gone from having 5-10 panic attacks per month, one so severe that I totaled my Tesla at 65 mph, to having zero to a couple of minor panic attacks monthly.

I've done it without the aid of drugs, using only supplements, mindset, and the tools and techniques in this guide

My goal is to help you live a more calm, grounded life with minimal anxiety.

1. Breathe Through Your Nose

This is a simple but powerful one. When you focus on your breathing, especially making your exhales longer than your inhales, you're telling your body it's safe to relax. Breathing through your nose is key because it directly stimulates your parasympathetic nervous system, which is the calming side of your nervous system [1, 2].

2. Try 4-7-8 Breathing

I love this technique. It's a specific breathing pattern that works wonders for relaxation. You simply inhale through your nose for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 7 seconds, and then exhale slowly through your mouth for 8 seconds. It's based on an ancient yogic practice and has been shown to be really effective for reducing anxiety [3, 4].

3. Hum Your Way to Calm

This might sound a little different, but humming is one of the most effective nervous system regulation tools I've found. I even wrote a blog post about it!

When you hum, the vibrations stimulate your vagus nerve, which is a major player in your parasympathetic nervous system. Try it for 2–5 minutes: breathe in through your nose

for a count of 4, and then hum on the exhale for a count of 8. You'll notice the exhale is naturally longer than the inhale, which is exactly what we're going for [5, 6].

4. Embrace the Cold

Taking a cold shower or doing an ice bath might not sound appealing at first, but it's a fantastic way to stimulate your parasympathetic nervous system and improve your vagal tone. Studies have shown that cold exposure can significantly boost your vagus nerve activity, which is a great thing for your overall resilience [7, 8].

5. Consider Supplements

This is definitely an area where what works for one person might not work for another, so it's important to listen to your own body. For me, I've found Inositol to be very helpful. I've also had good experiences with L-Theanine and Rhodiola. I have a blog post about this as well, if you want to dive deeper. As always, it's a good idea to chat with a healthcare professional before trying new supplements.

6. Meditate for a Few Minutes a Day

There's so much science behind the benefits of meditation. Even just 10–11 minutes a day can make a huge difference in your well-being. It's been shown to increase parasympathetic activity and even changes how your brain and nervous system interact [9, 10]. Plus, it helps to stimulate those calming alpha brain waves [11].

7. Connect with Loved Ones (and Pets!)

Never underestimate the power of connection. Physical affection, whether it's a hug from a friend or cuddling with your pet, stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system and helps you feel safe and calm. It's a natural and essential

part of being human.

8. Try CBT Journaling

You can even use your favorite AI app for this! Just tell it you want to do a CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy) journaling session. It's a great way to clear your mind, reframe negative or anxious thoughts, and get some perspective.

9. Listen to Your Body and Recover

This might seem like common sense, but it's so easy to ignore. I've been there – I completely frayed my nervous system by running a stressful real estate business and simultaneously deep diving into pickleball- playing for hours daily and being highly competitive. My stress release became a stressor. I was not giving myself downtime and recovery.

I learned about Heart Rate Variability (HRV) and started monitoring my day to day readiness to handle stress and acting accordingly. It's made a huge difference in my overall well being!

10. Nose Breathing During Workouts

Breathing through your nose during your workouts and while you're recovering from intense bursts of activity sends a signal to your nervous system that you're okay. Mouth breathing, on the other hand, can actually trigger a sense of panic. It's a small change that can make a big difference.

A Final Thought on Your Vagus Nerve

A common thread here is the vagus nerve. Think of it as the brakes for your nervous system. If it's not conditioned, it's like you have no brakes and your nervous system can run away like a train. Some great ways to condition your vagus nerve are:

- Cardiovascular exercise

- Long walks

Stretching and yoga

Breathwork

Simple movements like Tai Chi or rebounding

I hope you find these tips helpful! Remember, it's all about finding what works for you and being consistent.

Here's to a calmer, more regulated you!

PS:

You can practice a few of these online at my [Nervous System Regulation page](#).

And you can find more articles on my blog, markcool.org

References

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