

Your Stress Response Toolkit

In our modern-day environment, it's becoming a biological imperative that we learn to reset our nervous system and learn to manage life's daily stressors. It is almost certain that you experience at least one, if not many, nervous system triggers on a **DAILY** basis. Without the proper intention, attention and tools, these daily triggers can lead to long-term chronic issues.

If we want to be able to make good decisions, stay healthy mentally, physically and emotionally and perform at our best, we have to do more than just go with the flow in our lives, we need to do things each day **ON PURPOSE** to reset our nervous system!

Stress at work, in our relationships, in our bodies and immune systems and in our daily life circumstances accumulates over time and impacts every system in the body.

In order to counteract this cumulative effect, we want to intentionally reset our nervous system daily, throughout the day to bring us back to a state of homeostasis and peace - allowing us to function at our most optimal levels. In the following pages, there are many suggestions for you (with great empirical evidence for their impact and validity), to help you regularly reset your nervous system.

Below are some of the various ways stress can show up. Look and see if any of these are presenting issues for you right now.

Emotional symptoms of stress include:

- Becoming easily agitated, frustrated, and moody
- Feeling overwhelmed, like you are losing control or need to take control
- Having difficulty relaxing and quieting your mind
- Feeling bad about yourself (low self-esteem), lonely, worthless, and depressed
- Avoiding others

Physical symptoms of stress include:

- Low energy
- Headaches
- Upset stomach, including diarrhea, constipation, and nausea
- Aches, pains, and tense muscles
- Chest pain and rapid heartbeat
- Insomnia
- Frequent colds and infections
- Nervousness and shaking, ringing in the ear, cold or sweaty hands and feet
- Dry mouth and difficulty swallowing
- Clenched jaw and grinding teeth

Cognitive symptoms of stress include:

- Constant worrying
- Racing thoughts
- Forgetfulness and disorganization
- Inability to focus
- Poor judgment
- Being pessimistic or seeing only the negative side

Behavioral symptoms of stress include:

- Changes in appetite -- either not eating or eating too much
- Procrastinating and avoiding responsibilities
- Increased use of alcohol, drugs, or cigarettes
- Exhibiting more nervous behaviors, such as nail biting, fidgeting, and pacing



If you read the list above and found a number of triggers, don't fret. Some chronic stress symptoms need to be addressed by the appropriate medical provider (please do that if the symptom warrants it). However, some symptoms can be relieved just by using tools to reset the nervous system and increasing distress tolerance.

Below is your nervous system reset (or stress relief) toolkit. Each one of these tools comes with extensive research on how it impacts the nervous system and helps relieve stress.

After looking through the list (links provided so you can easily learn more about each tool), I will walk you through a process to put these suggestions into practice, followed by a daily worksheet to keep your plan on track.

1. **Belly Breathing** – use this tool to reset your nervous system through your breath. It's simple, fast and easy to learn. Even easier to use!
2. **Insight Timer** – This meditation app is my favorite. There are many other apps that help ease you into meditation. I love this one because you can create your own experience by adjusting the timer/sounds, you can follow along with a guided meditation or you can simply listen to meditative music. All in one app.
3. **Tapping** – Tapping is my favorite intervention right now. Think meditation meets acupuncture meets psychology (whatever that would look like!). I tap regularly and use it to help my clients heal everything from old trauma wounds to current anxious thoughts/beliefs.
4. **Exercise** – getting physical activity and some moderate exercise has never been more important. It will help you relieve stress, get better sleep, think more clearly, manage negative emotions and keep your body healthy. GET MOVEMENT – any movement. There are so many places to get free tips for how to move. Email me if you need some 😊
5. **Nature** – Get out in nature at least once a day if you can. This study is just one of many that shows that getting out in nature can lower your stress hormones in a significant way.



6. **Limiting Processed Foods and Sugar** – Your brain is particularly susceptible to processed foods and sugar while it's in a stressful state. They both tamp down the threat response system (if only temporarily), and both have addictive qualities that bypass your satiety hormone (the one that tells you you've had enough). They both also contribute to dopamine down-regulation which means you need more sugar and processed foods to create the original dopamine response your brain expects from the substance. For this reason, I suggest limiting your sugar and processed food intake (always, but ESPECIALLY in times of stress/duress).

7. **FAST (First Aid Stress Tool)** – I am a trained neuro-emotional technique (NET) practitioner, and one of the tools we use is the FAST tool. It is simple, easy to use and even kids can use it! You can download a printable PDF of the technique in the link.

8. **Gratitude** – A daily gratitude list will train your brain to think about the good things and steer you away from the news you are reading. You want to do this to actively point your brain in a more productive direction.

9. **Visualization** – visualization (sometimes referred to as guided imagery or mental imagery), can be incredibly powerful at training your brain to think, act and feel differently. Brain studies now reveal that thoughts produce the same mental instructions as actions. Mental imagery impacts many cognitive processes in the brain: motor control, attention, perception, planning, and memory. It's been found that visualization can enhance motivation, increase confidence and self-efficacy, improve motor performance, prime your brain for success, and increase states of flow—all relevant to achieving your best life! There is an app called **Envision App** that can help you begin with visualization.



Tips for implementing your toolkit.

1. Look over the tools I provided. Circle the ones that you think you could get yourself to do most easily.
2. Don't start all at once. Start small. Pick one thing. Find a place for it in your routine. Solidify that tool before adding another. **AGAIN, DO NOT IMPLEMENT ALL AT ONCE!** This will backfire. Just trust me. Only add more tools once you feel comfortable with the first one.
3. If the tool just doesn't feel right to you, move on to another tool. However, make sure you remain open. Just because something is uncomfortable, doesn't necessarily mean it's bad! Try to understand the difference between misalignment and discomfort.
4. Don't try to just add these to your busy day. Saying yes to some of these tools will mean saying NO to something else. Be prepared to say no in order to add these important tools to your life.
5. Stay accountable by tracking your progress. You can use the next sheet daily to reflect on your progress, or you can make your own. Iterate and change every few weeks/months as you expand and grow.
6. Be patient. Be persistent.



Daily Tools Check-In



- Belly Breathing
- Meditation
- Tapping
- Exercise
- Nature
- Limiting Processed Foods and Sugar
- FAST (First Aid Stress Tool)
- Gratitude
- Visualization
- Thoughts and Observations (what do I need to shift/change?)

- Daily Wins

