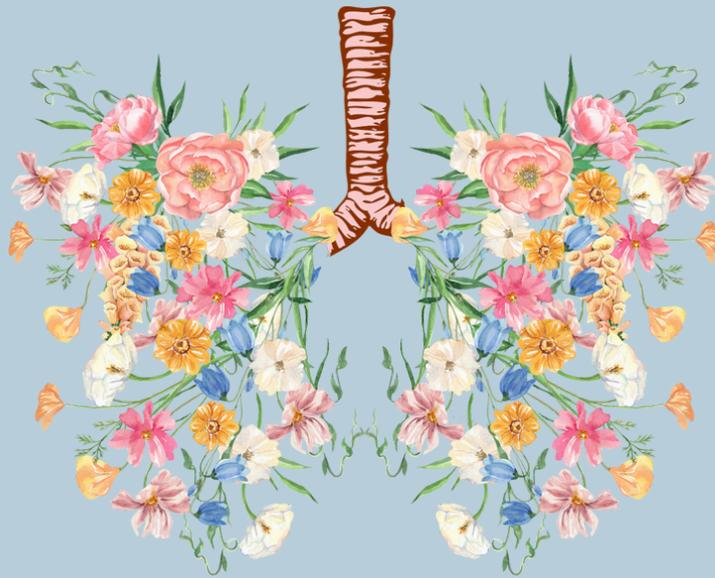


Vital 
BREATHWORK

Transform Your Breath, Transform Your Life

A GUIDE TO SELF-REGULATION

BREATHWORK & SOMATICS



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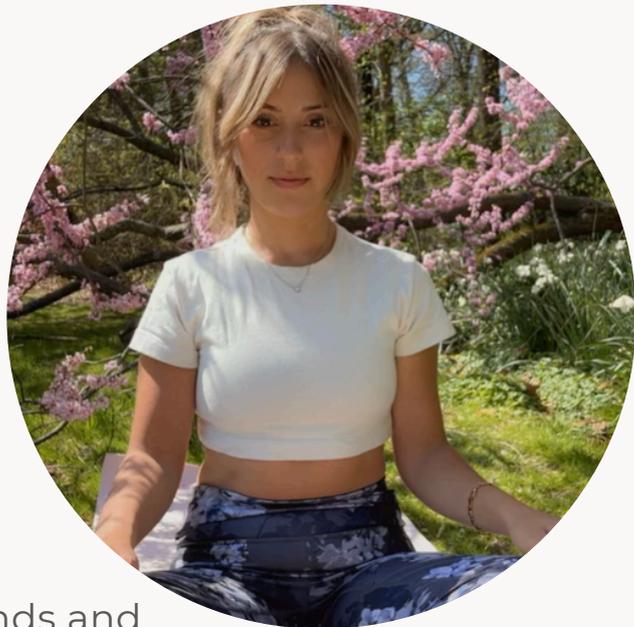
REFERENCES

MODULE 1



Introduction

Hello!



In a world with ever-pressing demands and contradictory information, prioritizing your own well-being can feel like a daunting task. Within this workbook you will find a kit of research-driven information and tools to create a foundation of health that empowers you to reduce the negative impacts of stress and make wise decisions that support your over-all wellbeing.

It is my hope that this workbook can support you to thrive and not just survive through life's challenges. Remember, these are simply tools and not a one-size-fits-all program. I strongly encourage you to take with you what works for you, and leave behind what does not.

Please note: this workbook is not a substitute for medical advice. Always consult a trusted physician before introducing new health regimes.

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The Nervous System

Our nervous system is largely responsible for our health, as it influences every cell, tissue, organ, and muscle within your body through the **vagus nerve**. The vagus nerve is the longest running nerve in your body, and it runs from your brainstem (Top of your neck) and down your spine, branching out through-out your body. Depending how our vagus nerve is stimulated by our environment, emotions, or lifestyle, it may activate various adaptive physiological responses of the nervous system to increase our chances of survival, such as:

- **Sympathetic Response** (Fight/Flight)
- **Dorsal Response** (Freeze/Fawn)
- **Parasympathetic Response** (Rest/Digest)

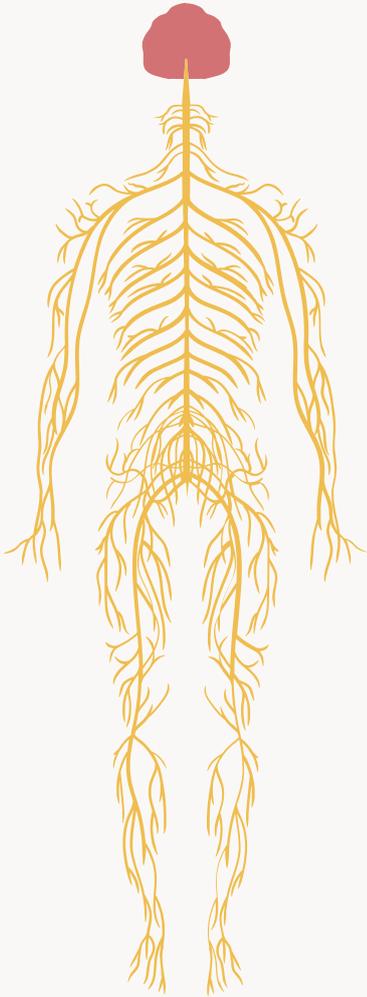
Our nervous system is flexible and meant to fluctuate between dominant responses. At baseline, our nervous system should be parasympathetic dominant, which allows us to feel relaxed within our body, curiously explore our environment, and express our emotions with ease.

When our nervous system becomes stressed, it first elicits a dominant sympathetic response. Our body releases a flood of hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol, raises our heart rate, tunnels our vision, narrows our attention, activates our muscles, shuts down our internal functioning, and gears us up to change our circumstances. This is meant to be a short-term adaption to the nervous system. Once resolved, the nervous system should return to a parasympathetic response.

However, if our nervous system is unable to resolve its physiological response and remains stressed, our physical, mental, and emotional health becomes negatively impacted. If our stress is chronic, then our body may develop chronic diseases, disorders, and dysfunctions.

Stress includes anything that negatively impacts the physiology of your body such as: environmental stress, relational stress, occupational stress, poor nutrition, poor sleep schedule, media, and lifestyle choices.

HOW IT WORKS



Vagus Nerve

The longest running nerve in the body (brainstem to pelvic floor). It controls our nervous system and influences all of our autonomic functioning. We stimulate the vagus nerve through our breath.

Inhale (sympathetic response)

Think of it as our gas pedal. It increases stress hormones in the body that provides energy for our body to function.

Exhale (parasympathetic response)

Think of it as our brake pedal. It allows for our energy to be utilized for internal functioning. It promotes rest, relaxation, and recuperation.

The problem

The stress of modern day life has altered our natural breathing pattern to inhale more frequently than necessary, which keeps our body in a state of perpetual stress, leading to poor physical and mental health conditions.

The solution

Learn how to practice mindfulness through breathwork, meditation, and somatic exercises to ease the body's sympathetic dominant response (stress) and activate the body's parasympathetic response (rest/heal) more often.

MODULE 2



Meditation



THE POWER OF VISUALIZATION

Our imagination is a powerful tool to regulating the nervous system. In our imagination, we have the capability of constructing worlds that exist outside of reality and the laws of nature. Within this landscape, we are fully in control of our experiences able to alter our visions immediately and without consequence. We are able to imagine solutions to problems that may seem unlikely or nonsensical. We are able to place ourselves within our dreams and picture future experiences that may or may not come to fruition.

Visualization allows us to explore and process thoughts, emotions, and concepts without real life consequences. It gives us space to express creativity, deepen our understanding, develop insights, and process our feelings. This creates a great sense of agency over our inner worlds that translates to the external world. As a result, we are able to use the power of our minds in a productive manner that empowers us and supports our nervous system vs, our minds being influenced by stressors that lead us to subconsciously visualize negative events.

The more you practice visualization, the better you are able to utilize your senses to engage your imagination. Some of our senses may take more practice to develop than others. Perhaps you are able to clearly hear a bird chirping, but have trouble seeing the bird in your mind. In this case, you can strengthen your sense of sight by looking at a picture of a bird and then closing your eyes and imagining it in your mind for a few minutes. The stronger your ability to engage your senses through visualization, the better you are able to manipulate your nervous system.



I'm grateful for:

GRATITUDE PRACTICE

When we practice gratitude, we reflect on the different people, places, things, and experiences that bring us a true sense of joy, security, and peace of mind. As we do this, we harness the power of visualization to access our senses and picture ourselves in our imagination experiencing that very thing that we felt grateful for. We utilize all of our senses to paint a landscape so clear it is as if we are right in that moment.

The beauty of visualization is that our brain does not realize the difference between our imagination and reality and releases the same positive hormones you had experienced in the past, such as dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin. Those who experience anxiety understand how simply thinking about what makes you anxious can induce a feeling of panic and dread. By practicing gratitude, we use the power of our mind to positively direct our physiology.

Additionally, practicing gratitude provides us the opportunity to acknowledge the plentiful supports, resources, and glimmers of joy that surround us. Despite setbacks or difficult circumstances, we are best served when we can focus on something positive to maintain our internal balance. The more we practice gratitude, the more likely we are to continue to seek those things we reflect on, creating a positive pathway to resiliency. Moreover, you are primed to move through your days identifying ever more opportunities for gratitude that add to your resources.

Gratitude can be practiced any time you would like to have a moment of mindfulness. You do not need to write in a journal (although that is a nice practice, too!) Rather, it's more about taking a moment to drop into your body, feel the sensations associated with your positive experiences, and allow those sensations to hold your awareness long enough to nourish you. This is a great way to start the day and end the night. 2-5 minutes is all that is necessary.

HOW TO

MEDITATE WITH GUIDED VISUALIZATION & GRATITUDE

THINK OF A PERSON/PLACE, THING/EXPERIENCE THAT BRINGS YOU GENUINE JOY, COMFORT, OR PEACE OF MIND. THEN USE YOUR SENSES TO ENGAGE YOUR IMAGINATION AND PICTURE YOURSELF WITHIN THAT MOMENT. IT HELPS TO CLOSE YOUR EYES IF YOU ARE SAFE TO DO SO!

EXPAMPLE: I AM GRATEFUL FOR MY MORNING WALK

WHAT DO YOU SEE?:

IE- I SEE MANY BEAUTIFUL HOMES AND CLEAN CARS. PLENTY OF TREES AND WELL-KEPT LAWNS. BIRDS & SQUIRRELS. SOMETIMES TURKEY AND DEER.

WHAT DO YOU HEAR?

IE- BIRDS CHIRPING. KIDS PLAYING. LAWN MOWERS. PODCASTS OR DANCE MUSIC DEPENDING ON MY MOOD

WHAT DO YOU SMELL? WHAT DO YOU TASTE?

IE- FRESH CUT GRASS. MY COFFEE. WATER WITH LEMON.

WHAT DO YOU FEEL?

IE- WARM SUN ON MY SKIN. FRESH AIR ON MY FACE. PAVEMENT UNDER MY FEET. COMFORTABLE WORK OUT CLOTHES. MY HEART BEATING. MY DIAPHRAGM

WHAT DO YOU APPRECIATE MOST ABOUT THIS MOMENT? HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL?

IE- I APPRECIATE THE MOMENT TO MYSELF TO MOVE MY BODY AND BE IN NATURE. I FEEL ENERGIZED, HEALTHY, AND GROUNDED.



MODULE 2



Breathwork

The background features a light-colored, textured surface, possibly wood or stone, with a hand holding a blue sphere in the upper right corner. A thin vertical blue line runs down the center of the page. The text is centered and reads:

Meditation is a universal
practice and our breath
is a universal language.

Heidi M. Morrison

Breathwork

The quality of our breath determines the quality of our life. In fact, recent studies have proven that our lung capacity is the greatest predictor of quality of life, much more significantly than diet and exercise combined! By practicing breathwork, you have the power to immediately influence your health in an impactful way with a tool you may take with you everywhere you go.



BENEFITS INCLUDE

- **Improves cardiovascular health**
- **Regulates blood pressure**
- **Balances blood pH**
- **Increases circulation**
- **Strengthens lung capacity**
- **Improves respiratory system**
- **Boosts immune system**
- **Improves digestion**
- **Improves sleep quality**
- **Supports oral health**
- **Reduces pain/ recovery time**
- **Reduces anxiety, depression, and stress**
- **Elevates mood**
- **Regulates hormone levels**
- **Enhances memory and information recall**
- **Enhances creativity/ inspiration**
- **Increases motivation and drive**
- **Increases strength, endurance, and stamina**

For more resources check out our website
www.vitalbreathworkllc.com

Breathing: Old Way vs New Way

When we are not conscious of our breath, the respiratory system defaults to an auto-pilot mode, which is greatly influenced by our nervous system. When the nervous system is under stress, it adversely effects the way we breathe. To breathe correctly, we must become mindful of our breathing patterns.

T H E N

Mouth Breathing

Upper Chest Breathing

Rapid, Erratic Breathing

Large Volume

Extended Inhales

N O W

Nose Breathing

Diaphragmatic
Breathing

Slow, Rhythmic
Breathing

Small volume

Extended Exhales

VS



BREATHWORK 101

01

Get Grounded

Find a comfortable place you will not be disturbed. Sit upright or lay down with back flat to ground. Feel your weight being supported underneath you. Settle into the present.

02

Connect to Breath

Close your eyes or soften your gaze. Turn your focus inward and bring your awareness to your natural breathing pattern. Feel your chest rise and fall. Take stock of the quality of each breath & your emotional state.

03

Practice Gratitude

Think of an experience that you feel truly appreciative for. Play the moment in your mind and engage your senses. What did it look, smell, taste, feel, sound like? Embody those sensations. as if you are in the moment.

04

Find your Rhythm

Bring your awareness back to your breath. Bring your breathing into a rhythmic pattern that supports your intentions. Remember to always balance or extend your exhales 2x as long as your inhales.

05

Form your Vision

Set an intention for the positive energy you are circulating through-out your system. Reflect back to your experience of gratitude. In which facet of life would you like to feel more gratitude? Envision yourself taking a step in a positive direction.

06

Affirm Action

Take stock of any important revelations, insights, thoughts, or emotions. Affirm your inner wisdom. Affirm your ability to see your vision through. Affirm your strengths. Affirm your internal and external resources. Ride your momentum!



Breathing Exercises

RELAXING BREATH

Breathe in rhythms of 2:4 or 4:8 (inhale: exhale)

By extending the exhale, you blunt your body's stress response stimulated by the sympathetic branch of your nervous system and in turn stimulate the parasympathetic branch which is responsible for your body's ability to relax and rest.

BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- Reduces stress levels
- Reduce symptoms of anxiety/depression
- Reduces heart rate
- Releases muscle tension
- Supports digestion
- Improves sleep quality
- Regulates blood pressure & pH
- Boosts Immune system



Breathing Exercises

BALANCING BREATH

Breathe in rhythm of 4:4 (inhale: exhale)

By balancing the length of the inhale and exhale, you balance the stimulation to your nervous system. As a result, your heart rate balances nourishing your muscles, organs, tissues, and cells with proper circulation of oxygen. This strengthens your heart rate variance, which indicates your body's ability to regulate stress hormone. Additionally, this pattern of breath brings the mind and body into a state of flow allowing you to feel alert yet relaxed.

BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- Balances heart rate
- Increases circulation
- Sustainable energy
- Elevates mood
- Increases focus/concentration
- Enhances creativity/inspiration



Breathing Exercises

ENERGIZING BREATH

Breathe in rhythms of 1:1 or 2:2 (inhale: exhale)

By increasing speed of the breathing rate, you stimulate the sympathetic branch of the nervous system which releases adrenaline into the blood stream. As a result, you feel a strong surge of energy and power.

BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- Increases heart rate
- Boosts metabolism
- Exercises diaphragm & core muscles
- Increases energy levels
- Increases strength
- Increases drive/motivation
- Increases focus/concentration



Breathing Exercises

CLEANSING BREATH

Use this breath as a transition from breathing exercises before returning to your natural breath. This allows the your body to integrate the positive benefits of the breathwork. To do so, take a full inhale and hold in momentarily. Then, exhale slowly through pursed lips a fraction of air at a time until you have fully exhaled. Hold your breath out for 5 seconds. Return to natural breath

BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- Release stagnate air from lungs
- Stretch diaphragm
- Release stress
- Balance energy
- Center the mind
- Refocuses attention



Breathing Exercises

ALTERNATE NOSTRIL BREATH

Breathe in any rhythm of choice.

You'll need one hand to alternate blocking a nostril at a time. Use the thumb and the index, ring or pinky finger, whichever is most comfortable. Block one nostril with thumb and inhale through the other. Lift finger, then block the other nostril. Exhale. Inhale through alternate nostril. Repeat 10-20x or for 5 minutes.

BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- Unblocks sinuses
- Activates both brain hemispheres
- Improves oxygenation to system
- Centers the mind
- Increases concentration/focus
- Improves motor coordination



Breathing Exercises

LIONS BREATH

Breathe in rhythm of 2:4, 4:8 or 2:8

This breath includes vocal toning and the relaxing breath. It is particularly powerful when you need to release a strong emotional charge or muscular tension in the body. As you exhale, make a loud sound like “AH” through an open mouth. Let your tongue hanging half out. You will look like a roaring lion!

BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- Discharges strong emotional energy
- Releases tension in face & muscle
- Reduces stress levels
- Stimulates relaxation
- Centers the mind



Breathing Exercises

PHYSIOLOGICAL SIGH

Breathe in a rhythm of 1, 1:4 (inhale, inhale: exhale)

This breathing pattern is scientifically proven to be the fastest acting somatic tool to reduce stress levels - more so than any other breathing pattern or physical movement. Simply take two short, rapid inhales through the nose then exhale slowly and fully through pursed lips. Repeat as many times as necessary. You should begin to feel calm within 2-3 breaths.

BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- Discharges strong emotional energy
- Reduces stress levels
- Stimulates relaxation
- Centers the mind



Breathing Exercises

HUMMING

Breathe in rhythms of 4:8 or 4:12 (inhale: exhale)

When we hum we produce a significant amount of nitric oxide which is a powerfully healing molecule. Nitric oxide soothes our nervous system, boosts the immune system, and elevates our mood. You can hum along to your favorite songs. For a more meditative effect, practice humming the sound “AUM.”

BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- Reduces stress levels
- Reduces anxiety/depression symptoms
- Stimulates relaxation
- Releases endorphins
- Elevates mood
- Boosts Immune system
- Enhances creativity/inspiration

MODULE 4



Somatic Tools



Somatic Exercises

WHAT IS IT?

The word somatics comes from the Greek word “Soma” which means the body as a whole. The goal of somatic exercise is to focus on bringing awareness to your body through various movements. This allows you to regulate your nervous system.

HOW TO DO IT?

Self-awareness and mindfulness are key! Bring your awareness to the energy within your body and how you feel through-out the movements. By practicing these movements and understanding your bodily sensations, you develop a somatic tool kit to help you regulate your nervous system as needed.



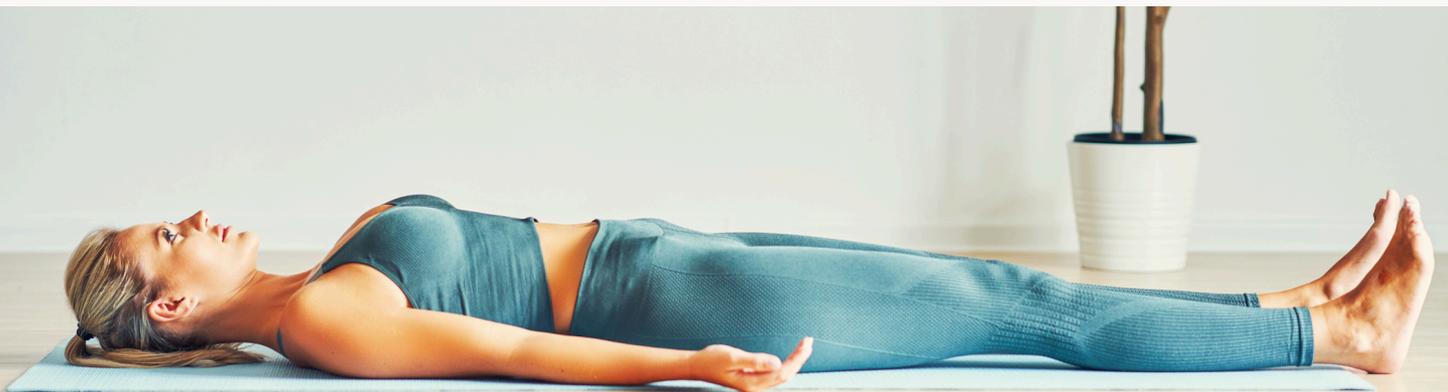
Do what feels good

Somatic Exercises

BODY SCAN (5 MIN)

This is a great way to relieve tension after a stressful day or before bed to help relax.

- Find a quiet comfortable room where you will not be disturbed.
- Lay down with your back flat, arms spread out to your side, legs slightly apart.
- Close your eyes or soften your gaze
- Turn your awareness inwards.
- Practice the relaxing breath (2:4, 4:8)
- Starting from the bottom, isolate your awareness to each part of your body.
 - Progressively working your way from your feet to the crown of your head, contract and release each muscle group
 - Inhale & squeeze muscles as strongly as you can, then exhale and release muscles slowly.
- Spend a little more time with muscle groups that are particularly tense.





Somatic Exercises

ECSATIC DANCE (2-5 MIN)

This is a great way to relieve stress, elevate mood, and increase energy levels.

- Play up-beat music that you enjoy dancing to (not required, but helpful!)
- Place feet squarely on ground
- Slightly bend your knees & bounce up/down
- Allow arms to hang loosely at sides. Shake
- Drop head slightly to release neck tension. Sway
- Turn awareness inward & allow the energy within move your body.
- If you feel energy increasing, increase the speed you bounce and shake
- If you feel energy is low, slow the down the movement.
- Pair with Balancing Breath

You may experience powerful emotional and energetic releases. Allow them to surface without judgement or the urge to stop the flow. Take stock of emotions and energy after the exercise. You should feel much relief!

Somatic Exercises

PILLOW THROWING (2 MIN)

This is a great way to relieve stress and discharge negative emotions/energy such as aggression or anger.

- Grab a pillow and clear the space around you
- Lift pillow up high above the head
- Slam pillow down with full force
- Repeat as much as needed
- Pair with Lions Breath
 - Inhale while lifting pillow
 - Exhale while slamming pillow
- End with Cleansing Breath

When we experience anger or aggression, the sympathetic branch of the nervous system becomes activated and releases stress hormones, such as cortisol and adrenaline. This exercise puts those hormones to use, helping us to discharge the negative energy in a cathartic, healthy way, rather than suppressing it or releasing it in an outburst.





Somatic Exercises

BUTTERFLY HUG (2 MIN)

This is a great way to soothe a hyper-aroused nervous system, such as when feeling overstimulated, overwhelmed, or symptoms of anxiety.

- Sit or lay down with back straight
- Cross arms and places hands on alternate shoulders
 - right hand, left shoulder
 - left hand, right shoulder
- Close eyes or soften gaze
- Turn awareness inward
- Tap one shoulder at a time
- Pair with Relaxing Breath

This provides the body with bilateral stimulation that helps to desensitize your nervous system and bring your awareness back to the present moment. It is soothing, but best only done for a couple of minutes.

Somatic Exercises

HIP OPENERS (2-5 MIN)

Much of our stress and energy become trapped within the PCOAS muscles of our hips. Often, this expresses as muscle tension. To release the trapped energy and muscle tension, we can open the hips with the following exercises.



HIP CIRCLES

Sit cross legged. Move hips in circles both clockwise and counter clockwise. Use upper body to help guide the movement.

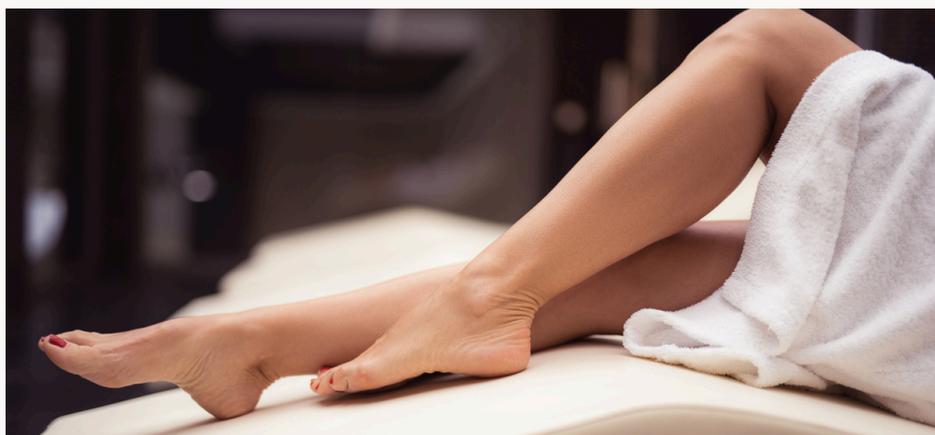
HIP TILTS

Sit cross legged. Tilt your hips forwards and backwards. Use upper body to lean into the movement and provide extra stretch.

Somatic Exercises

HIP OPENERS (2-5 MIN)

Much of our stress and energy become trapped within the PCOAS muscles of our hips. Often, this expresses as muscle tension. To release the trapped energy and muscle tension, we can open the hips with the following exercises.



KNEE BENDS

SINGLE LEG

Lay flat on your back. Extend one leg out. Bend the other leg at the knee and plant your foot. Let the bent knee fall toward the ground. Hold stretch for a moment. Lift leg back to starting position. Repeat 5-10x per leg.

BOTH LEGS

Lay flat on your back. Bend both legs at the knee. Touch feet together. Let bent knees fall toward the ground. Hold stretch for a moment. Lift legs back to starting position. Repeat 5-10x.

Somatic Exercises

HIP OPENERS (2-5 MIN)

Much of our stress and energy become trapped within the PCOAS muscles of our hips. Often, this expresses as muscle tension. To release the trapped energy and muscle tension, we can open the hips with the following exercises.



BOOTY SCOOTS

Sit on the floor, with your back straight, arms lifted to shoulder height, and feet out in front of you. Inch your hips, one side at a time, as if scooting forward. Then repeat the same movement backwards. Scoot in each direction 6x.

Do what feels good

Somatic Tools

NATURE THERAPY

Nature is a powerful regulation tool. When our energy/emotions feel stagnant or overwhelming, spending time in nature allows our nervous system to reboot, recalibrate, and become resilient. Here are some scientifically proven ways to utilize nature to shift your mood and improve mental health.



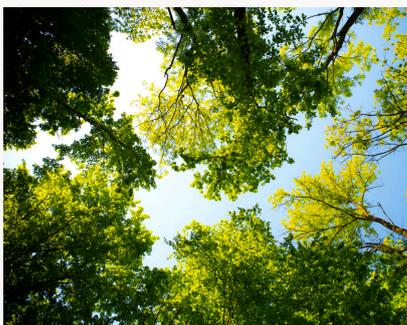
SUNLIGHT

Sunlight helps to balance our circadian rhythms and is rich in Vitamin D which is essential for our energy levels



SALT WATER

Our body is 99% comprised of salt water. Spending time in salt water allows our body to properly detox from stress and cleanse our energy.



TREES

Spending time near plants and trees has a grounding effect on our nervous system. A nature walk is a perfect way to desensitize when overwhelmed.

Somatic Tools



SOUND THERAPY

Recent studies have found that sound frequencies have a significant effect on our brainwave patterns which are strongly correlated with our emotions, mood, thoughts, and performance. Spending time in specific brainwave patterns can have both positive and negative effects. The following are our brainwave frequencies and their correlating effects. Youtube has a wonderful library of sound therapy videos to experiment with what feels good to your nervous system.

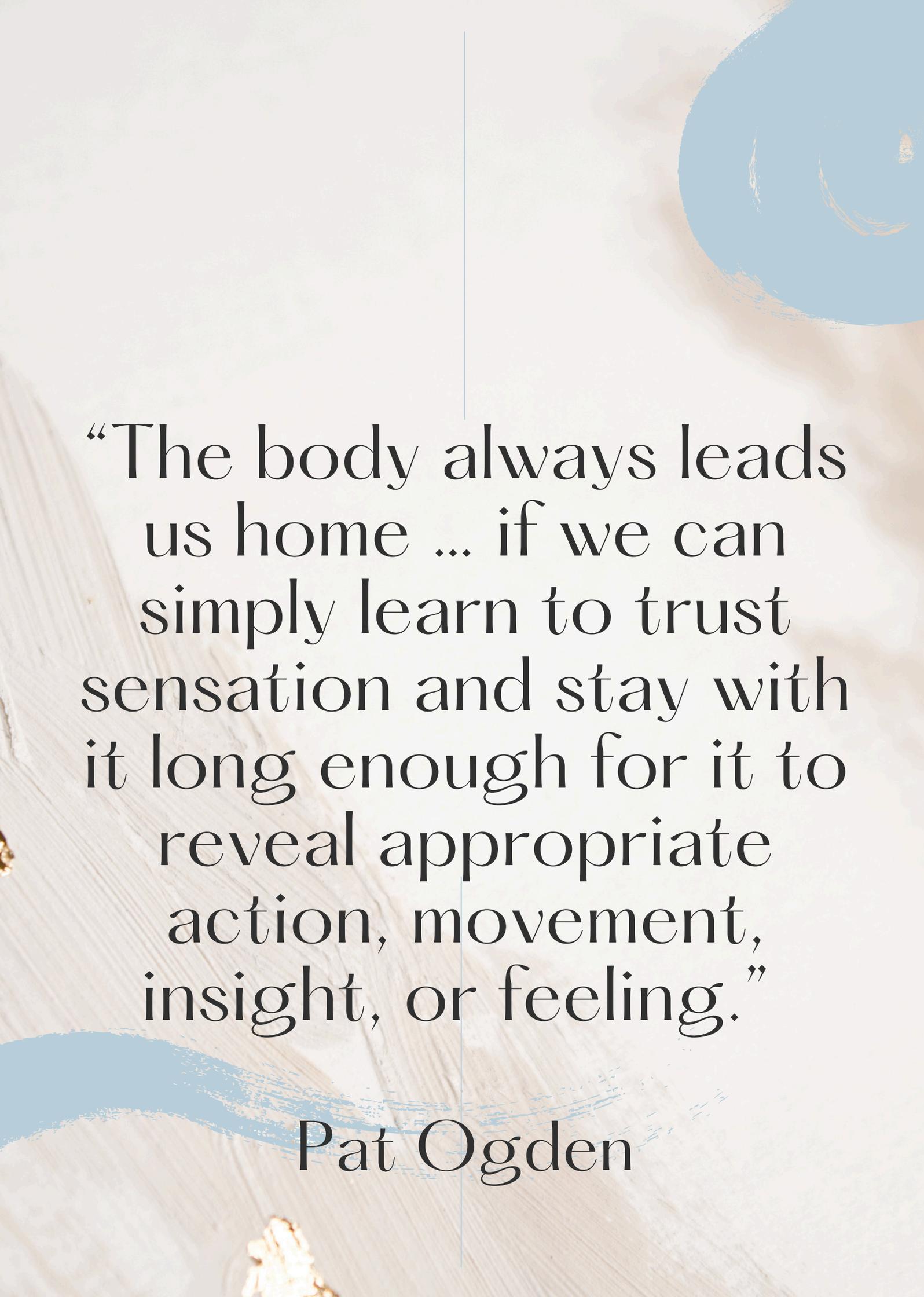
Delta (1-3 Hz): Known as the sleeping state. Delta waves allow our body to regenerate and heal from stress and stimulation. Too much time in a delta state can lead to low energy levels and inability to focus.

Theta (4-8Hz): Known as the meditation state. Theta waves allow us to rest while awake or experience vivid dreams while sleeping. This state helps us to process and resolve emotions and information. Too much time in Theta state can lead to over thinking and symptoms of anxiety.

Alpha (8-12Hz): Known as the flow state. Alpha waves allows your body to rest while your mind remains active. This state helps us to be creative, imaginative, and reach inspired solutions. Too much time in Alpha state can lead to sense of dissociation and escapism.

Beta (13-24): Known as the alert state. Beta waves allow us to focus our attention and execute tasks efficiently. Too much time in Beta can lead to over-stimulation and burn-out.

Gamma (25-140 Hz): Known as ecstatic state. Gamma waves allow us to feel increased energy levels, heightened passion, and strong sense of intuition. Too much time in Gamma can lead to aggravation, hysteria, and hallucinations.

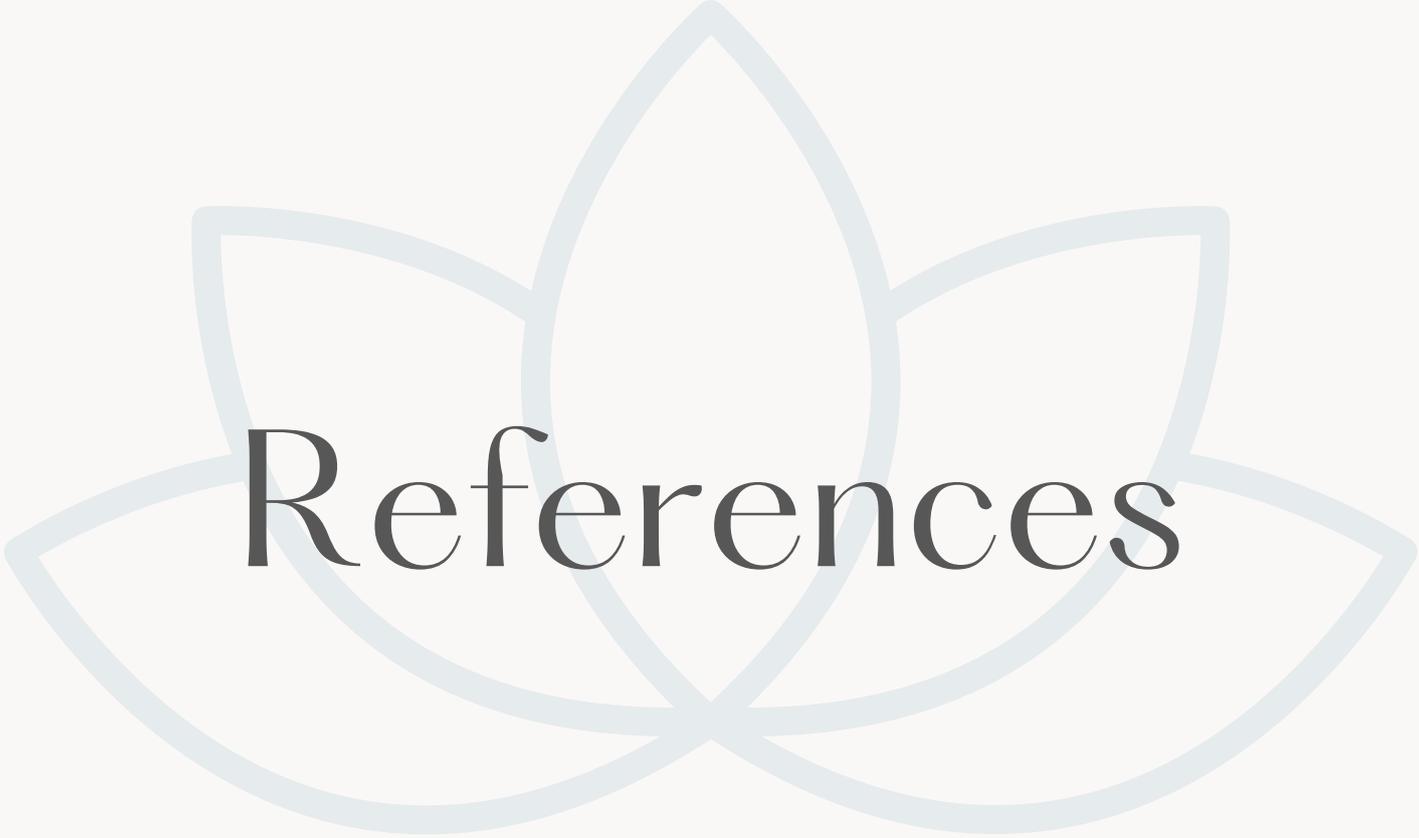


“The body always leads us home ... if we can simply learn to trust sensation and stay with it long enough for it to reveal appropriate action, movement, insight, or feeling.”



Pat Ogden

MODULE 4



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VITAL BREATHWORK

FEEDBACK

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Nervous System Regulation Guide
As a token of gratitude, please enjoy
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