

My
Stress Management
Guidebook



Concepts & Vocab

The 2 Types of Stress:

- Eustress- positive stress that helps us overcome challenges and achieve goals.
- Distress- negative stress usually associated with anxiety and overwhelm.

The 4 Stress Responses of the Nervous System:

- Fight/Flight
- Freeze/Fawn

Albrecht's 4 Types of Stress:

- Time Stress
- Encounter Stress
- Anticipatory Stress
- Situational Stress

The Duration of Stress:

- Acute- short term stress.
- Episodic- recurring stress.
- Chronic- recurring stress over a long period of time.

Stages of a Stress Response Cycle (SRC):

- We encounter a stressor.
- Our bodies respond.
- The stressor is overcome.
- The stressor has passed or been dealt with.
- Our bodies return to a state of rest and recovery.

Concepts & Vocab

Allostasis- the ability to adapt to environmental challenges by anticipating and adjusting energy use.

Allostatic Load- the wear and tear on the body caused by chronic stress.

Human Giver Syndrome- refers to the belief that one (caregiver) has a moral obligation to support others at any cost to themselves.

Metacognition- awareness of one's own thoughts and thought processes.

Neuroplasticity- the brain's ability to adapt and change in response to stress and other environmental stimuli. Can be beneficial, neutral or negative depending on the outcome.

Somatics- a field of study that focuses on the body's internal physical sensations, perceptions, and experiences. Heavily based in the Mind-Body Connection.

Stress Resilience- the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress.

Vagus Nerve- 10th cranial nerve that plays a large role in inducing relaxation and reducing stress.

Vagal Tone- how well the Vagus nerve is functioning. High vagal tone is associated with a greater ability to recover from stress.

Window of Tolerance- the ideal emotional zone that a person needs for optimal functioning.



Vagus Nerve

Stimulation: Touch



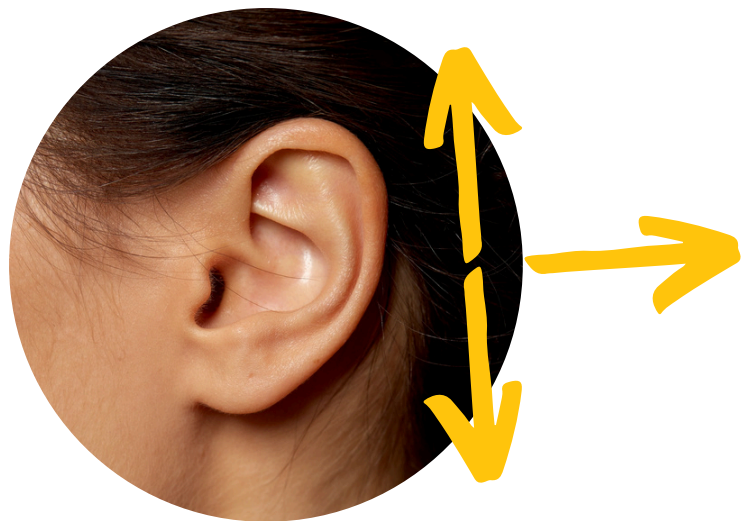
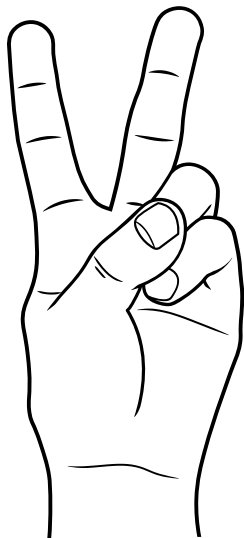
Inner Ear Massage

- Using the tip of your index finger, find the small concavity just above the opening of your ear canal.
- Using small circles, gently massage the skin in a circular motion.
- Do this for 30-60 seconds.
- Repeat on the other side.



Back of Ear Massage

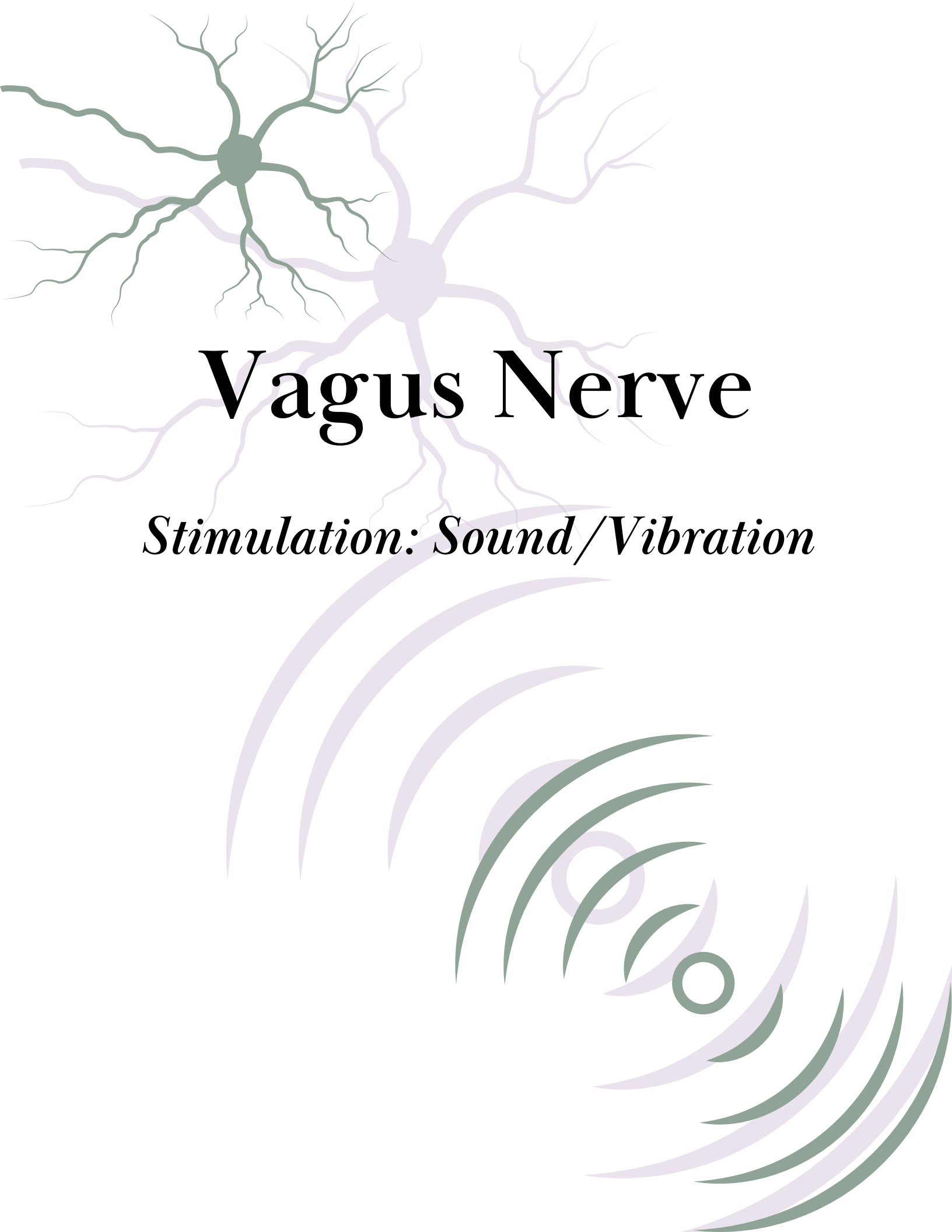
- Using your Peace Fingers, apply gentle pressure to the skin directly behind your ear.
- Slide the skin upward and hold. Slide the skin downward and hold.
- Slide the skin toward the back of your head (toward your hairline) and hold.
- Hold the positions for however long you like, but aim for 30-60 seconds or longer.
- Repeat on the other side.



Neck Stroke Stimulation

- Simply tilt your head gently to one side and using the tips of your fingers,
- Lightly stroke the exposed side of your neck.
- Do this until you feel a physical shift (sigh or yawn) in your body.
- Repeat on the other side.





Vagus Nerve

Stimulation: Sound/Vibration



Hum


When humming, focus on the vibrations felt in the throat with the option to pair humming with deep breaths for added stress relief.

Try to hum for 2-3 minutes. For beginners, try to hum a couple times a day, working up to doing it multiple times a day.

Gargle

When gargling, focus on directing the water to the back of your throat and gargle vigorously to be sure to activate the Vagus nerve and improve vagal tone.

Try to gargle for 30-60 seconds a day.





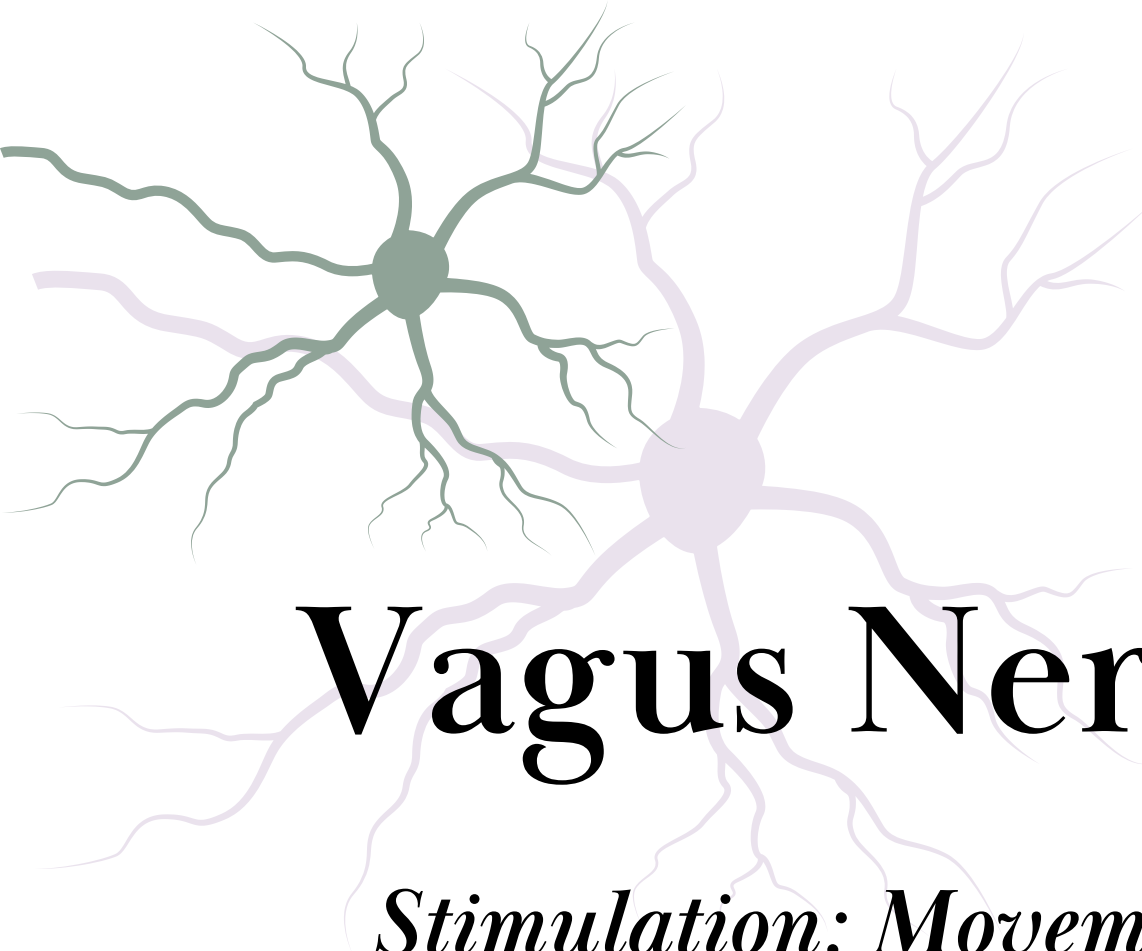
Om

Find a comfortable seated position with an upright spine. Take a deep inhale through your nose and on your exhale, vocalize the “om” sound through your mouth.

Try to extend the “Oh” part of the sound nearly to the bottom of your exhale. Close out your exhale with the “mmm” sound.

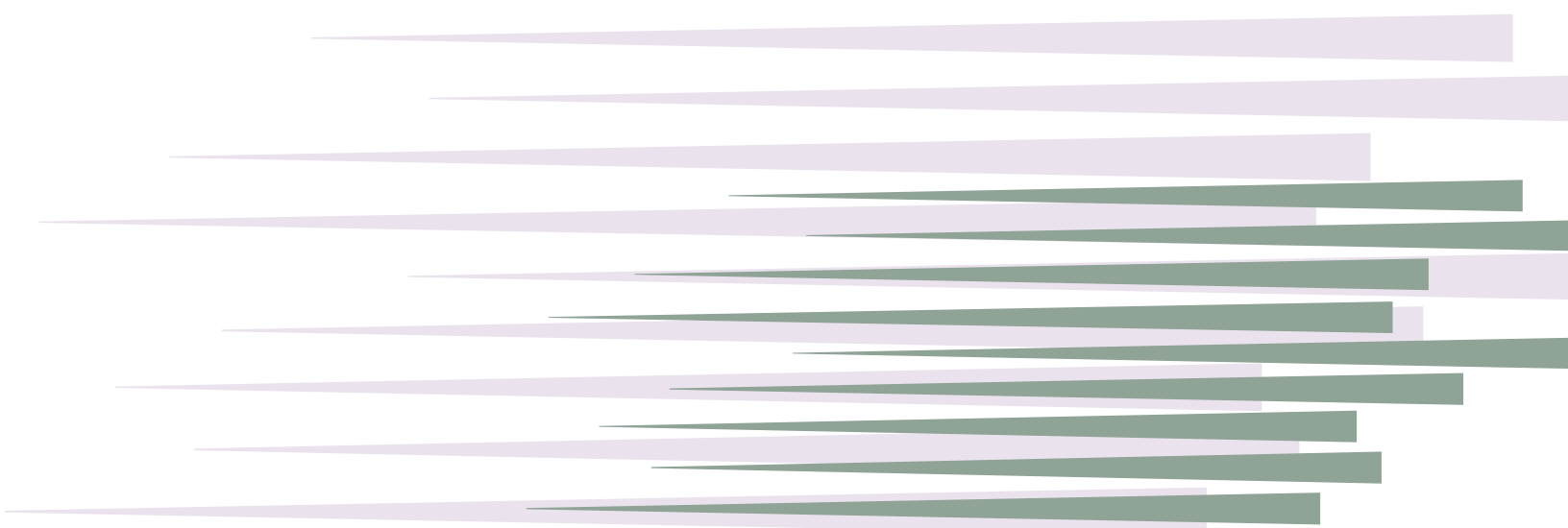
Focus your attention on the quality of vibrations felt in your vocal chords and in your chest, as well as your deep breaths.

Practice this exercise for several minutes, focusing on the **QUALITY** of the sound/vibrations rather than the quantity of rounds.



Vagus Nerve

Stimulation: Movement



Neck Stretch with Directed Gaze

- Find a comfortable seated or standing position.
- Place your right palm on the leftside of your head and apply light pressure.
- Feel the gentle stretch extend up the leftside of your neck.
- Shift your gaze up and to the left.
- Hold this position until you feel a shift (sigh or yawn) in your body.
- Repeat on the opposite side.



Gaze upward

Yoga: Child's Pose

Start on all fours, hands stack under shoulders and are shoulder-width apart. Knees stack under hips and are hip-width apart. If it's comfortable, slightly splay knees outward, wider than hip distance and gently press back toward your heels. Extend your arms forward and release your forehead to the ground.

If you have knee issues, tightly roll a towel and place it in the creases behind your knees before pressing back into the position.

If you struggle to get your forehead to the ground, use a yoga block or a couple sturdy books to bring the ground "up" to your forehead.

Remember to breathe into all areas of your body—your back, hips, chest. Stay here for at least 30 seconds or longer.



Yoga: Bridge Pose

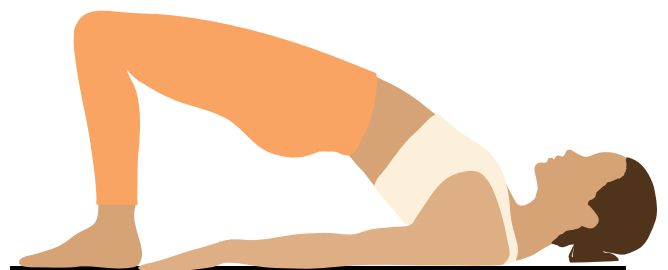
Begin on your back in a reclined position. Bend your knees and walk your feet toward your hips until your shins are perpendicular with the ground. Place your feet flat on the ground and keep them hip-width distance apart.

Inhale as you lift your spine off the floor, one vertebrae at a time. Your hips are the last to rise toward the ceiling while you keep your shoulders and feet firmly planted. Option to press palms into the ground for extra stability.

Relax your glutes. Stabilize your core. Hold for at least 30 seconds and then slowly release your spine toward the ground, one vertebrae at a time.

For a supported version, place a yoga block or a thick, sturdy book beneath where your sacrum meets your tailbone.

Remember to breathe.

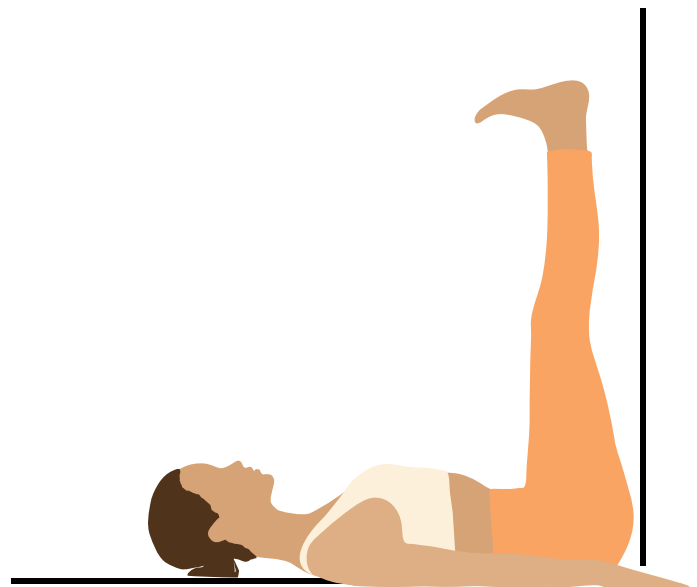


Yoga: Legs Up the Wall Pose

Getting into this pose can be awkwardly funny, so do what you need to do to end up reclined on your back with your hips as close to the wall as possible and legs extended up the wall.

Let your arms extend at 30-45 degree angles to your torso. Stay here for 30 seconds to 2 minutes (or longer if you'd like). Focus on your breath.

Option to use a blanket over your torso and/or eye pillow/mask for added grounding and relaxation.



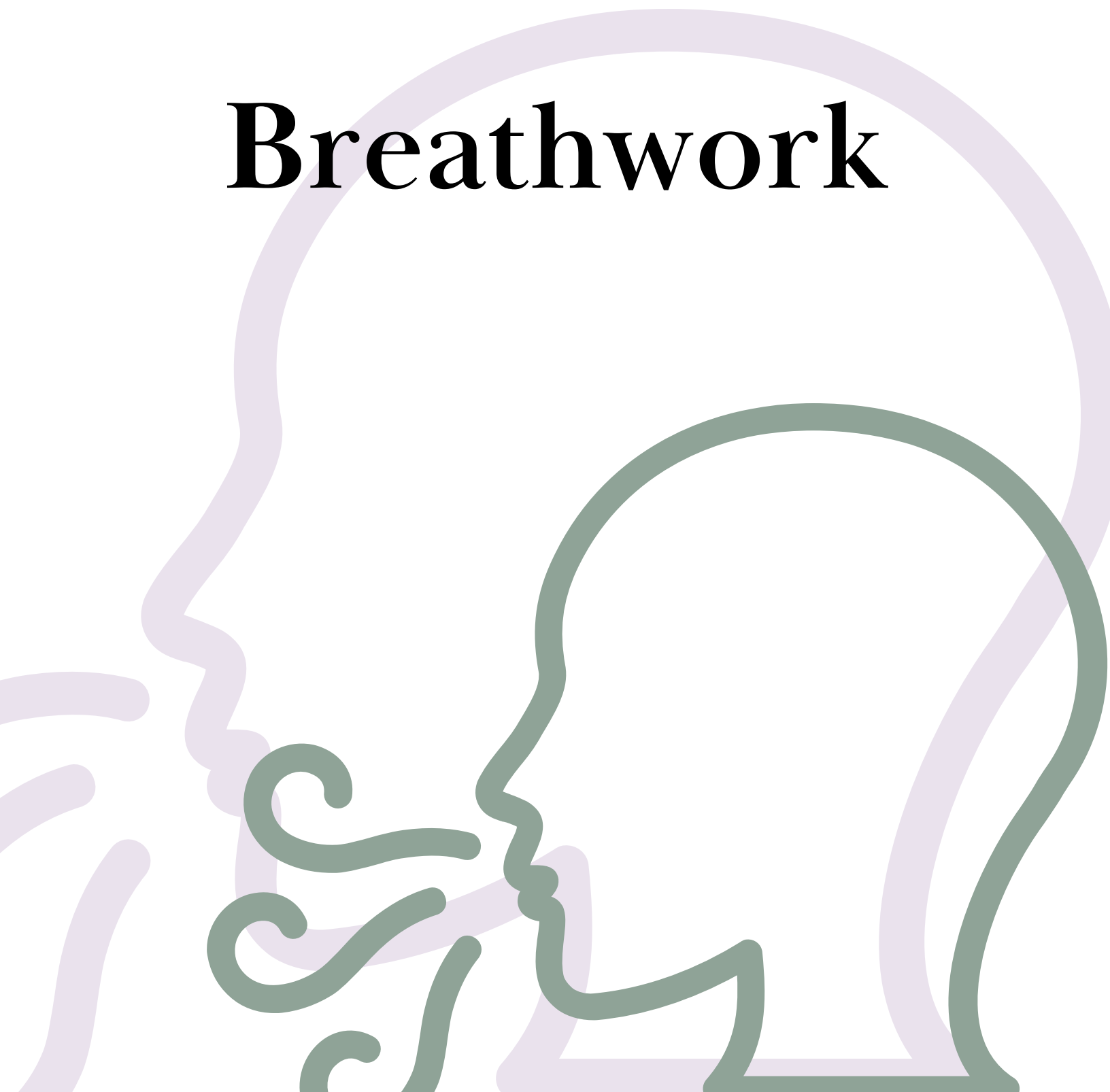
Cold Water Immersion

- Finish your shower with a cold water rinse. Begin with 30 seconds and slowly increase your duration over time.
- Wash your face with cold water at the end of a long day.
- Face Plunge in Ice Water- Immerse your eyes, forehead and 2/3 of your cheeks in a bowl of ice water. Begin with 30 seconds and take breaks as needed. Repeat 4-5x.

*Side Note: Cold exposure can be very dysregulating for a nervous system that is already taxed by chronic stress and burnout. Starting off slowly and seeing how your body reacts is recommended.

If your body says, “no”, that’s okay. Opt out of cold exposure for now as you build your resilience and broaden your Window of Tolerance.

Breathwork



Box Breathing (4x4 Breath)

- Find a comfortable seated position and tune into your breath. Notice its current rhythm, depth and sound.
- For Box Breathing, your inhales and exhales will be equal length and all breath is done through the nose.
- Next, take a deep inhale through your nose and sigh it out through an open mouth. Do this two more times.
- On your next inhale, inhale for a count of 4 (1, 2, 3, 4). Hold at the top of your inhale for a count of 4. Exhale through your nose with control for a count of 4. Hold at the bottom of your exhale for a count of 4. That's one round. Repeat for as many rounds as you like, being mindful to stop if you become light headed.
- After you have completed your rounds, return to your natural breath. Notice any sensations (without judgement) that arise or dissipate.

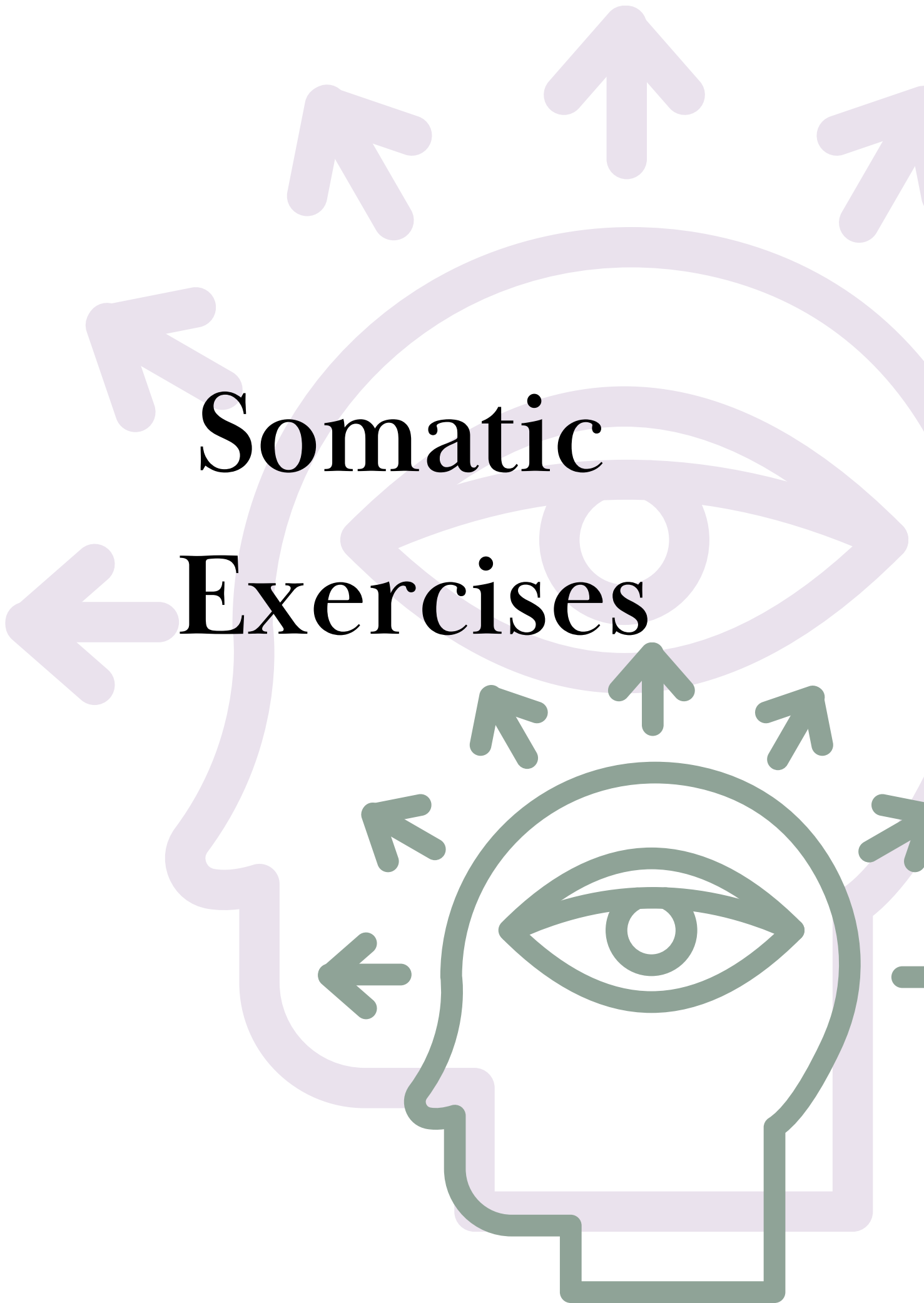
Diaphragmatic Breathing

- Find a comfortable seated or reclined position and tune into your breath. Notice its current rhythm, depth and sound.
- Place one hand on your chest and the other on your lower belly just below your rib cage.
- Inhale slowly through your nose. Fill your belly with air and notice your lower hand rise with your inhalation while the hand on your chest remains still.
- Exhale through pursed lips as your belly tightens inward and returns to its original position.
- Repeat for at least 5 minutes, being mindful to stop if you become lightheaded.
- After you have completed your rounds, return to your natural breath. Notice any sensations (without judgement) that arise or dissipate.

4-7-8 Breath

- Find a comfortable seated or reclined position and tune into your breath. Notice its current rhythm, depth and sound.
- For 4-7-8 breathing, your inhale will be through your nose for a count of 4 and your exhale will be through an open mouth that makes a “whoosh” sound for a count of 8.
- Take a deep inhale through your nose and sigh it out through an open mouth. Do this two more times.
- Next, inhale for a count of 4. At the top of your inhale, hold your breath for a count of 7 and be sure to relax instead of tensing up. Then exhale with control for a count of 8.
- That’s one round. Repeat for at least 3 rounds, being mindful to stop if you become lightheaded.
- After you have completed your rounds, return to your natural breath. Notice any sensations (without judgement) that arise or dissipate.

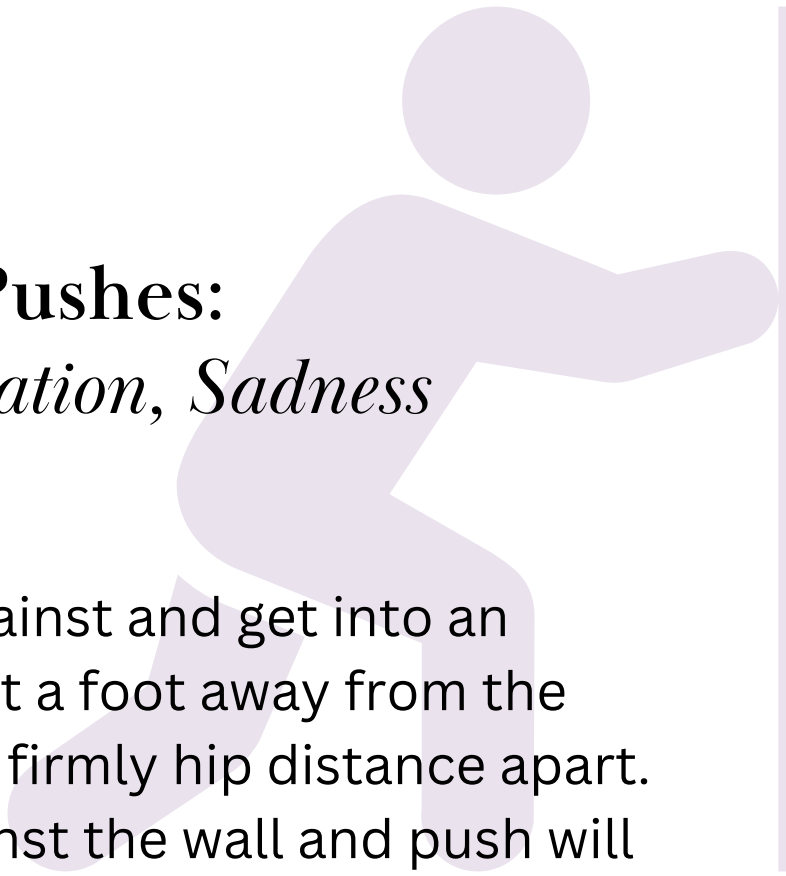
Somatic Exercises



Wall Pushes:

Anger, Frustration, Sadness

- Find a wall to *push* against and get into an athletic position about a foot away from the wall with feet planted firmly hip distance apart.
- Plant your palms against the wall and push with all your might as if you were trying to move the wall.
- Engage all of your muscles- legs, arms, back, core. Continue pushing until your legs, arms or core begin to shake or quiver.
- Take a break. Check in with yourself. Repeat as many times as you need to. End with a few deep breaths.
- Option: Make some NOISE! Let out a deep growl as you push for an added stress reliever.



Unfurling:

Uncertain, Stuck, Want to Move Forward

- Find a comfortable cross-legged seated position. If this is uncomfortable, consider sitting on a yoga bolster or a thick folded blanket to raise your hips up.
- Begin by simply noticing any sensations in the body. Where do you feel stuck or held back?
- Next, cross your arms over your chest, lower your head and bring your knees toward your chest to curl into a ball.
- While you're doing this, imagine yourself as a fern in the forest. In the cool morning, they're curled upon themselves. As the sunshine warms the air and their leaves, they begin to open up.
- Next, slowly begin to uncurl your torso and your neck. Your knees fall open and arms open and extend at your sides. Notice the different sensations you're experiencing.
- Repeat for at least a couple minutes with the option to add more movement- clench your hands and feet and then open them wide, exaggerate curling and opening throughout your entire body.


Link to [Unfurling IG Video](#)

Containment Hug:

Unsafe, Insecure, Anxious

- Begin by crossing your arms over your chest.
- Take the arm closest to your chest and tuck its palm into your armpit.
- Take the arm furthest from your chest and place its palm on your shoulder.
- Stay here for as long as you like. Tune into any sensations that come up, always coming back to reassuring yourself that you are safe and grounded.
- Option: sway from side to side as if you were holding and comforting a baby.





Grounding: 5-4-3-2-1 Method:

Anxious, Overwhelmed, Unstable

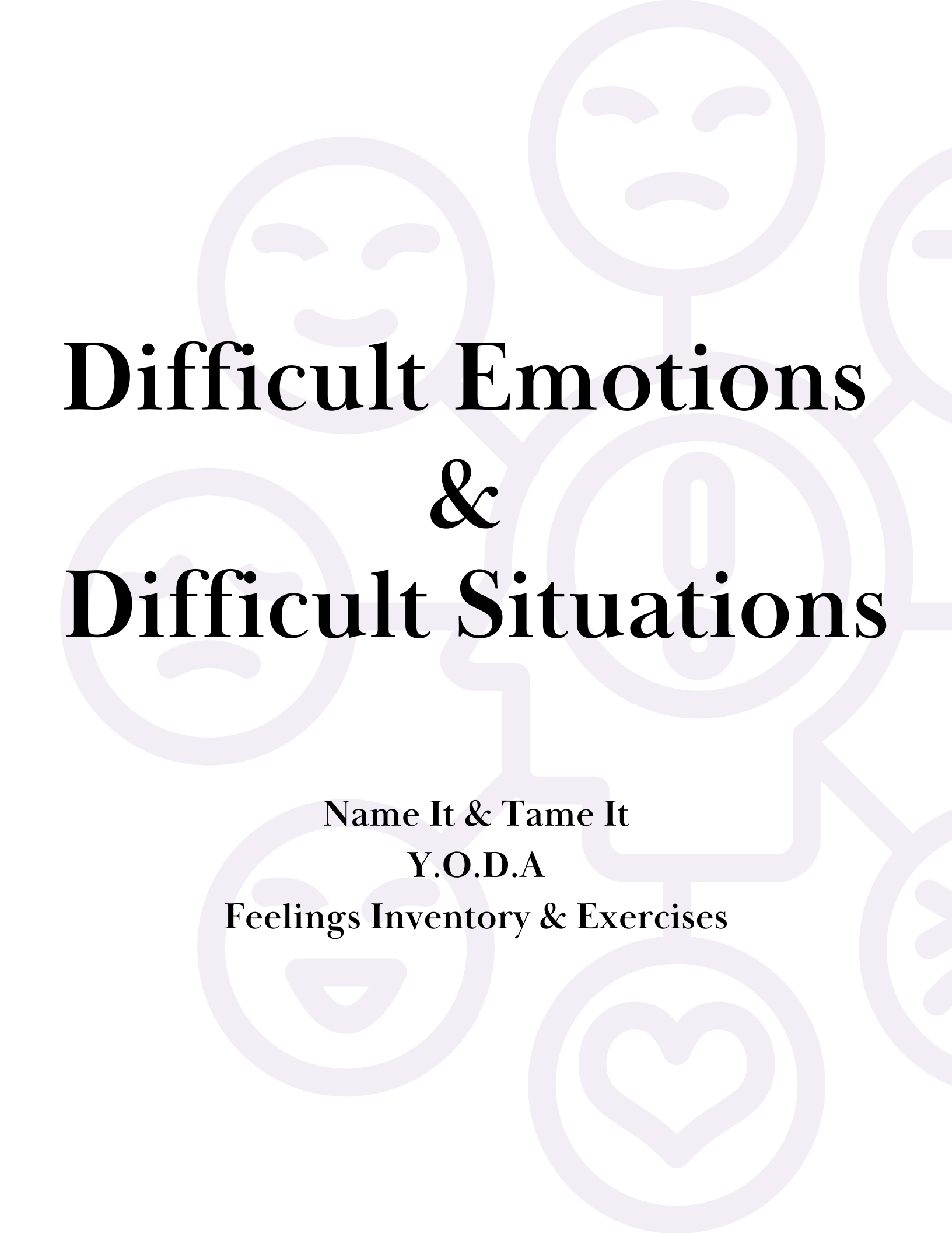
Take a moment to note your surroundings through your 5 senses to come back to the here and now.

Note:

- 5 things you see
- 4 things you hear
- 3 things you can touch/feel
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

Feel free to mix and match; you don't have to SEE FIVE things- you can see four things and touch/feel 5 things.

Option: Say your list out loud and bonus if you pay attention to things you don't regularly notice.



Difficult Emotions & Difficult Situations

Name It & Tame It

Y.O.D.A

Feelings Inventory & Exercises



Name It & Tame It Exercise

Putting feelings into words can help to reduce the force of unpleasant emotions.

First, notice what your body is telling you and slowly inhale.

Then, recognize that you're upset. Slowly exhale.

Next, honestly name what you're feeling. Slowly inhale.

Lastly, notice your body begin to calm. Slowly exhale.

Continue to name and breathe (tame) until you are regulated.

On the next pages is a list of feelings and emotions, as well as other descriptive terms. This helps me really narrow down what I'm feeling.

Give it a try!

EMBARRASSED

Ashamed
Flustered
Guilty
Mortified
(Self-Conscious)

DISQUIET

Agitated
Alarmed
Discombobulated
Disconcerted
Disturbed
Perturbed
Rattled
Restless
Shocked
Startled
Surprised
Troubled
Turbulent
Turmoil
Uncomfortable
Uneasy
Unnerved
Unsettled
Upset

CONFUSED

Ambivalent
Baffled
Bewildered
Dazed
Hesitant
Lost
Mystified
Perplexed
Puzzled
Torn

ANGRY

Enraged
Furious
Incensed
Indignant
Irate
Livid
Outraged
Resentful

YEARNING

Envious
Jealous
Longing
Nostalgic
Pining
Wistful

AFRAID

Apprehensive
Dread
Foreboding
Frightened
Mistrustful
Panicked
Petrieved
Scared
Suspicious
Terrified
Wary
Worried

PAIN

Agony
Anguished
Bereaved
Devastated
Grief
Heartbroken
Hurt
Lonely
Miserable
Regretful
Remorseful

TENSE

Anxious
Cranky
Distressed
Distraught
Edgy
Fidgety
Frazzled
Irritable
Jittery
Nervous
Overwhelmed
Restless
Stressed out

SAD

Depressed
Dejected
Despair
Despondent
Disappointed
Discouraged
Disheartened
Forlorn
Gloomy
Heavy hearted
Hopeless
Melancholy
Unhappy
Wretched

DISCONNECTED

Alienated
Aloof
Apathetic
Bored
Cold
Detached
Distant
Distracted
Indifferent
Numb
Removed
Uninterested
Withdrawn

AVERSION

Animosity
Appalled
Contempt
Disgusted
Dislike
Hate
Horrorified
Hostile
Repulsed

FATIGUE

Beat
Burnt out
Depleted
Exhausted
Lethargic
Listless
Sleepy
Tired
Weary
Worn out

ANNOYED

Aggravated
Dismayed
Disgruntled
Displeased
Exasperated
Frustrated
Impatient
Irritated
Irked

VULNERABLE

Fragile
Guarded
Helpless
Insecure
Leery
Reserved
Sensitive
Shaky



Y.O.D.A. Breakdown

Y: YOU are responsible for your reactions, responses and choices. YOU are the only thing that you can control- not other people, not situations or events...just YOU and the choices you make when it comes to your stress management.

O: Observe the situation through an *objective* lens to identify what exactly is triggering you. Being objective is important because emotions can skew our perception.

D: Deconstruct the situation. WHY are you upset, stressed, anxious? Getting to the bottom of the situation and identifying the stressor provides some resolution and clarity.

A: Accept & Adjust your expectations. You have two choices here. You can accept the situation and stressor for what it is and continue to allow it to stress you out, OR you can accept the situation and take control by choosing to ADJUST your expectations around the situation.



Mind-Body Connection Exercises

Guided Exercises



Body Scan Meditation



Progressive Muscle Relaxation

For both of these exercises, find a comfortable seated or reclined position free of distractions.

Option to use an eye mask and/or blanket over your torso for added relaxation and sensory deprivation.

Pleasant Events Log

- Bring your attention to one pleasant event a day and record it. This is an opportunity to be curious and really explore your thoughts, emotions and sensations experienced.
- Note the date, what the experience is, bodily sensations experienced, emotions & feelings that come up, thoughts that arise, and your thoughts that come up while journaling.
- Do your best to journal your reflections about the pleasant event as soon as you can after the event.



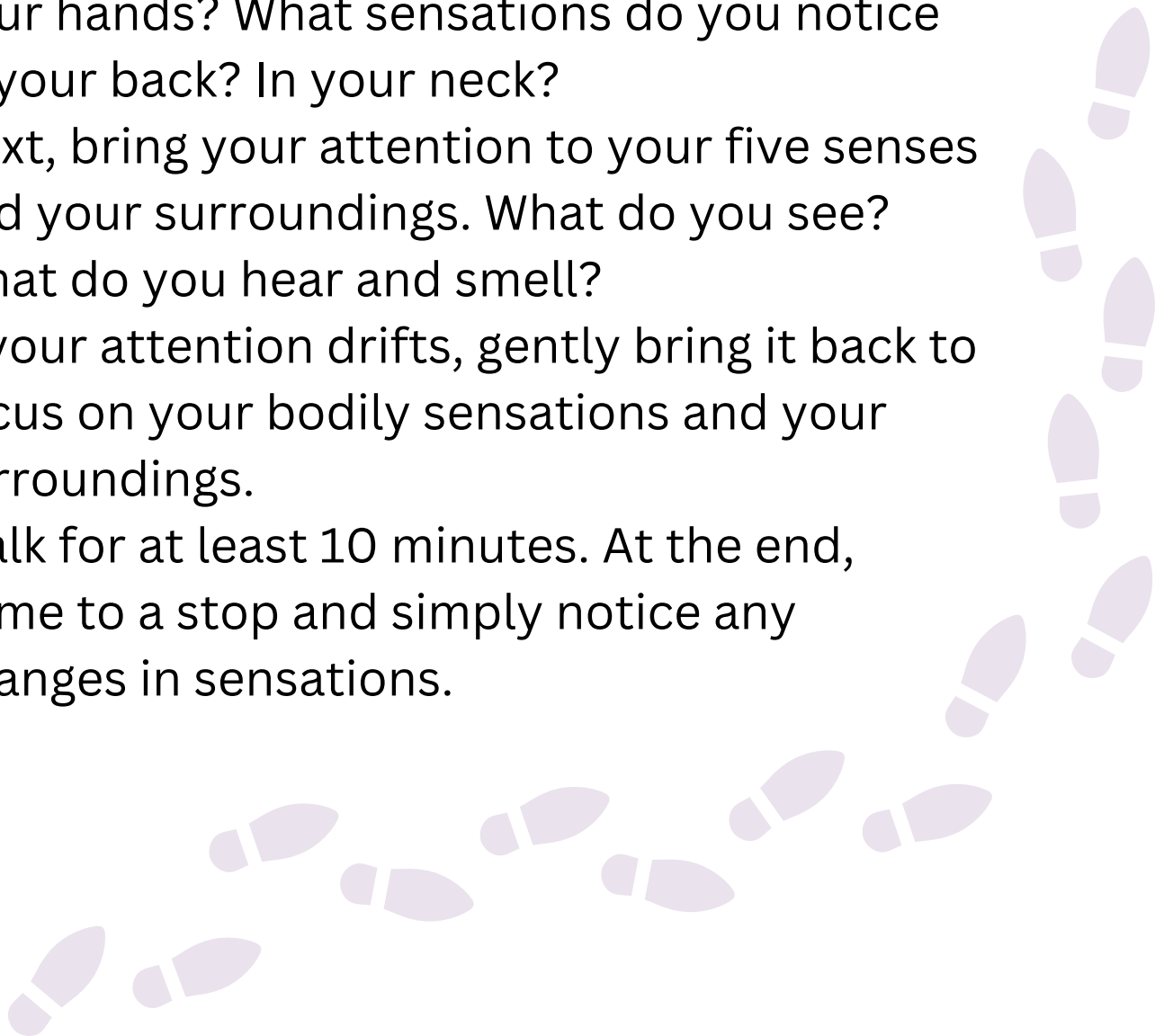
Pleasant Event Log

Date	Experience	Body Sensations	Emotions/Feelings	Thoughts	Thoughts now while you write



Walking Meditation

- Begin by finding a comfortable walking pace inside or outdoors.
- First, bring your attention to your body and what sensations you feel. Notice how your feet contact the ground and how your knees bend. What are your arms doing? How about your hands? What sensations do you notice in your back? In your neck?
- Next, bring your attention to your five senses and your surroundings. What do you see? What do you hear and smell?
- If your attention drifts, gently bring it back to focus on your bodily sensations and your surroundings.
- Walk for at least 10 minutes. At the end, come to a stop and simply notice any changes in sensations.



**Long-Term
Happiness & REAL
Self-Care**



SPIRE

- **Spiritual**- Contributing to something bigger than ourselves and fostering a better world.
- **Physical**- Physical and mental health are the basis for everything in life.
- **Intellectual**- Growth happens when we reflect & act; we have to exercise our brains.
- **Relational**- Community is vital for overall wellbeing, however, to have healthy relationships with others, we have to have a good relationship with ourselves first. Giving, sharing, and openness are all elements of a healthy relationship.
 - *QUALITY of relationships is more important than the QUANTITY.
- **Emotional**- Having and showing emotions is part of the human experience and all emotions are legitimate and acceptable.

Daily Integration

**Remember your goal- what do you desire most?

- List out your daily responsibilities & obligations.
- Which ones are flexible and which are rigid? Write an F for flexible and an R for rigid next to each item.
- Determine which things can be temporarily de-prioritize to make room for high priority self-care practices that you're trying to integrate into your daily life.
- Determine when and which self-care practices, exercises and tools will fit best into your daily schedule. Can any be tagged on as a *micro-habit*? Get creative.
- Play around with these. Do some experimentation. Find out what you like and don't like, best times to practice, and best exercises to do in different situations.
- Keep showing up. Effort is what counts here, not perfection.

Ideal Avatar Exercise

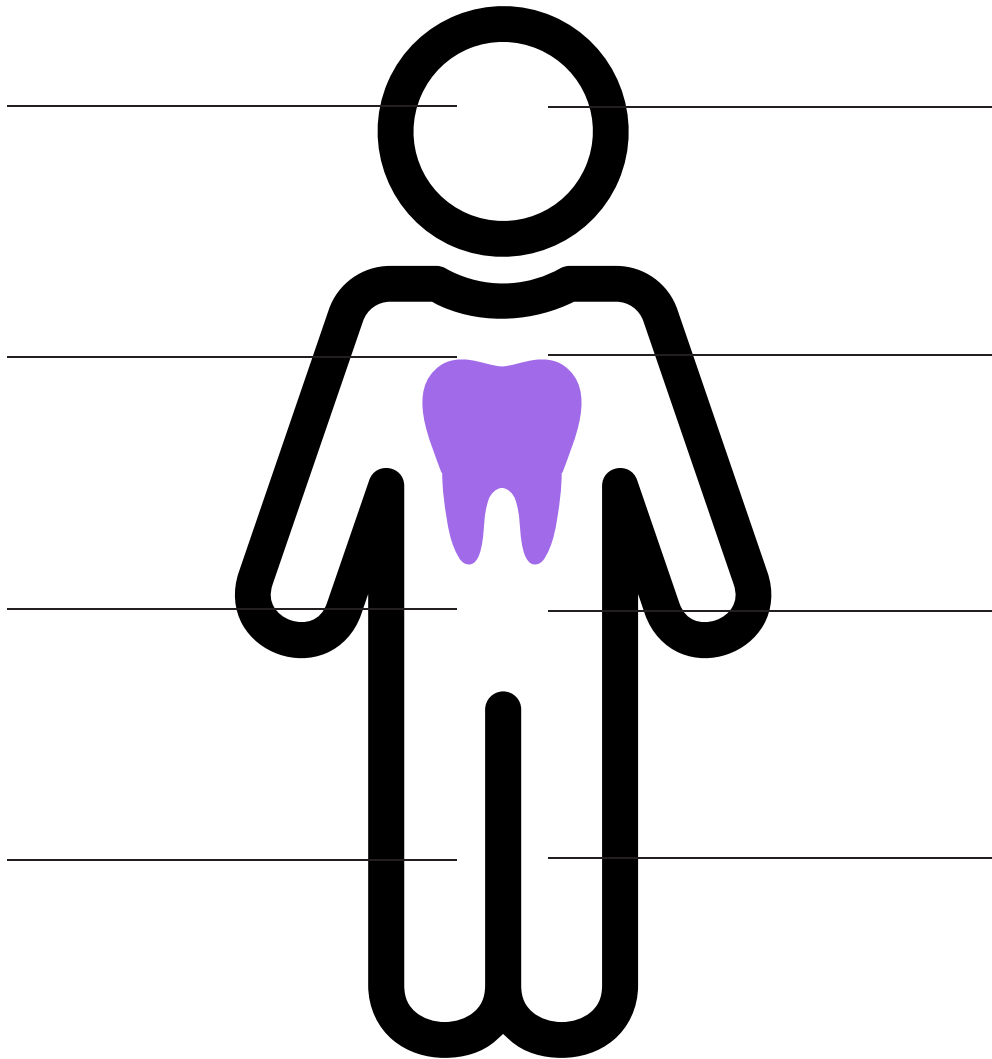


Work Avatar

Goals:

Tools:

List characteristics that you want to embody below (calm, present, focused)

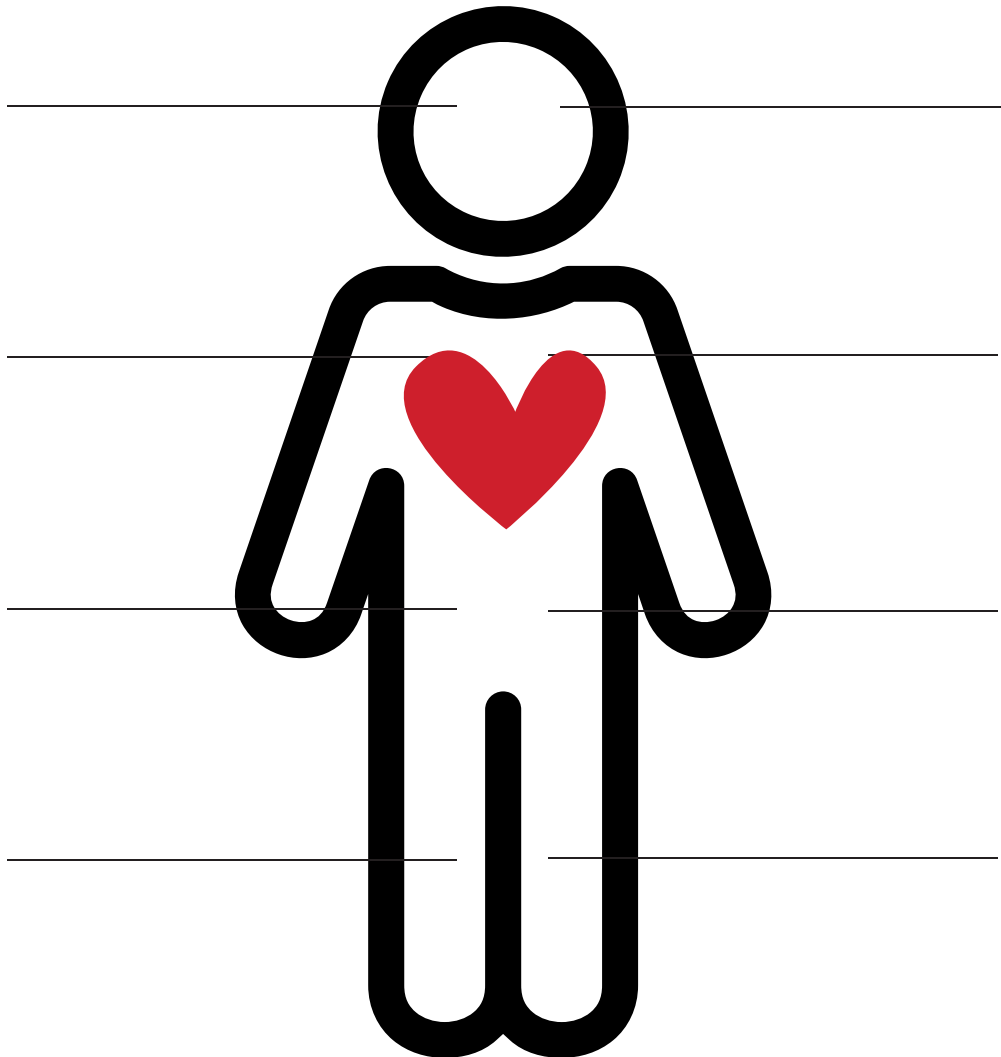


Personal Life Avatar

Goals:

Tools:

List characteristics that you want to embody below (present, warm, loving)



Thanks Hygiene Fam!



Click here



Daily stress management
and burnout tips



Guided exercises
and explanations