



20 Simple Ways to Regulate Right Now

(Because Everything Else Depends on It)

Why This Matters



Your nervous system is the operating system for everything else in your life. When it's dysregulated, both your mind and body become unbalanced. But when it's regulated? You can show up as the person you want to be. These 20 practices aren't a to-do list. They're a menu. Try what calls to you.

Notice what helps. Come back to this when you're frazzled and can't remember what to do.

★ **It's not a luxury. It's your responsibility. And that's something worth protecting.**

We've made you a list — because when you're dysregulated, it's nearly impossible to remember what might help. Print this. Keep it somewhere visible. Use it as a gentle reminder to prioritize yourself.

sparkle stories

1 Minute

When you literally only have sixty seconds

- 1 The physiological sigh.** Fill your lungs with two quick inhales through your nose, then a long, slow exhale through your mouth. Do this 2-3 times. This literally shifts your nervous system from sympathetic (fight/flight) to parasympathetic.
- 2 Name what you see.** Look around and silently name five things you can see. This interrupts the stress loop and brings you into the present moment.
- 3 Cold water on your wrists.** Run cold water over the insides of your wrists for 30 seconds. The temperature change activates your vagus nerve and can quickly downshift activation.
- 4 Hum or sing.** Any tune. Any volume. The vibration stimulates your vagus nerve, which helps regulate your nervous system.
- 5 Feet on the floor.** Press your feet firmly into the ground. Notice the sensation. Press harder. This simple proprioceptive input tells your nervous system, "I am here. I am safe. I am supported."
- 6 The "voo" sound.** Take a deep breath and exhale while making a low "vooooo" sound. The vibration combined with the slow exhale is deeply calming. Do it three times.
- 7 Shake it out — or dance it out!** Literally shake your hands, arms, and shoulders for 30 seconds. Animals do this instinctively after a stressful encounter to discharge the activation. We can too.



3 - 5 Minutes

When you have a few minutes to reset:

- 8 Step outside barefoot.** Direct contact with the earth (called "grounding" or "earthing") has measurable effects on cortisol levels and inflammation.
- 9 Butterfly hug.** Cross your arms over your chest, hands on opposite shoulders. Gently tap alternating sides — left, right, left, right — at whatever pace feels soothing. This bilateral stimulation is commonly used in trauma therapy.
- 10 Write it out.** Three minutes of stream-of-consciousness writing. Don't edit, don't judge, just let it flow onto the page. Getting it out of your head and onto paper creates space. Check out our Journal Prompts blog post to help get you started.
- 11 The 4-7-8 breath.** Inhale for 4 counts, hold for 7, exhale for 8. Repeat 4 times. This ratio specifically activates the parasympathetic nervous system. Follow a guided session of this breathwork practice here.
- 12 Listen to one song with your full attention.** Actively listen. Let yourself feel whatever comes up. Music engages multiple brain regions and can shift your state quickly.
- 13 Gentle self-massage.** Massage your temples, your jaw, behind your ears, and the back of your neck, where you hold tension.
- 14 Look at something growing.** A plant, a tree, anything alive. Really look at it. Notice the details. Nature — even a houseplant — reminds your nervous system that not everything is urgent.

10 - 15 Minutes

When you have a bit more time:

- 15 Walk, even just around the block.** The bilateral movement of walking is inherently regulating. No headphones, no podcast — just you and your body moving through space.
- 16 Sit Spot + Body scan.** Lie down or sit comfortably. Starting at your toes, bring your attention to each part of your body, moving slowly upward. Where are you holding tension? This practice builds interoception — your ability to sense what's happening inside you. A great place to do this is with your own personal Sit Spot. You can learn more about Sit Spots here. While you're there, be sure to listen to the original Martin & Sylvia audio story "Sit Spot" from the Anxiety Tea collection.
- 17 Make yourself a cup of tea** (the whole ritual). Boil the water. Choose the cup. Watch the tea steep. Hold the warm mug. Drink it slowly. The ritual matters as much as the beverage.
- 18 Gentle stretching or yoga.** Nothing intense. Just slow, mindful movement that helps you feel your body. Movement is medicine for the nervous system.
- 19 Call someone who helps you feel seen.** Not to vent (unless that's what you need), but for connection. Co-regulation is real — being in the presence (even virtual) of a regulated, attuned person helps regulate your own system.
- 20 Rest.** Lie down. Set a timer. Don't scroll. Don't plan. Don't optimize. Just be horizontal and let your system settle.