

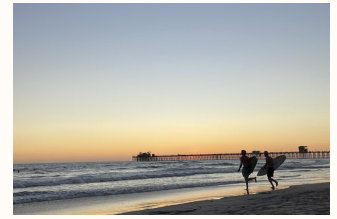


FREE RESOURCE · EDUCATION

Your Nervous System, Explained

Fight-or-flight, rest-and-digest, and simple ways to help your body feel safe again.

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Your nervous system quietly runs your heartbeat, breathing, digestion, and alertness. It has two main modes, and you need both. Health isn't about staying calm all the time — it's about being able to shift back to calm after stress.

Fight-or-flight

- Your body gets ready for action: faster heartbeat, quick shallow breathing, tense muscles, sharp focus.
- Helpful in an emergency or a big moment.

Rest-and-digest

- Your body recovers: slower heartbeat, deeper breathing, relaxed muscles, good digestion and sleep.
- Where healing and repair happen.

When stress stays switched on day after day, the body has less time to recover. Over time that can show up as poor sleep, stomach trouble, low mood, more pain, and getting sick more often. The tools below help you shift back into rest-and-digest.

Ways to shift into rest-and-digest

1

Make your out-breath longer

Breathe in for 4, out for 6–8. Repeat 10 times. This is one of the fastest ways to calm your body.

2

Practice slow breathing daily

About 6 breaths per minute for 5–10 minutes. With practice, your body gets better at calming itself.

3

Move the stress through

A brisk walk, shaking out your arms and legs, or a gentle yoga flow uses up the stress energy.

4

Look around you

Slowly turn your head and name what you see. It tells your brain you're safe right now.

5

Connect and reflect

Spend time with a calm person or pet. Prayer, gratitude, and meditation pair meaning with slow breathing.

When to reach out

If anxiety, low mood, poor sleep, or trauma reactions are getting in the way of daily life, please talk with a therapist or your doctor. Asking for help is a strong step.

LEARN MORE

- **NIMH** — stress basics: [nimh.nih.gov](https://www.nimh.nih.gov)
- **Search "resonance breathing"** for guided slow-breathing practice
- **Free videos:** "Whole Living with Nikki" on YouTube

KEY EVIDENCE

- McEwen BS. N Engl J Med. 1998;338:171–179 (long-term effects of stress).
- Lehrer PM, Gevirtz R. Front Psychol. 2014;5:756 (slow-breathing / HRV).
- Balban MY, et al. Cell Rep Med. 2023;4:100895 (breathwork RCT).
- Thayer JF, Lane RD. Neurosci Biobehav Rev. 2009;33:81–88.

Make it personal: take the free 60-second quiz or book a **free consultation** at wholelivingwithnikki.com — services are pay what you can.

Educational wellness information, not medical advice or treatment. Check with your care team before starting new activity. Stop if you feel pain, dizziness, chest pressure, or shortness of breath.