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Relax Into Presence

How to Activate Your Vagus Nerve for Better Mental and Physical Health

1. Slow deep breathing; inhale to count of 4, exhale to count of 6-8. Breathing in and out the heart helps to achieve coherence between the heart and brain. More benefit from also focusing on something you are grateful for.
2. Hum, chant, sing. Use your vocal cords. Chant Om. Lion's pose in Yoga – stick your tongue out while doing spinal stretch and roar.
3. Pull tongue out while doing deep breathing, pull side to side and then out again.
4. Gargle with water.
5. Push into belly button while deep breathing.
6. Cold exposure: Run cold water in the shower for 30 seconds, splash face with cold water or use ice cubes on the forehead. You can also imagine your forehead being cool.
7. Loving kindness meditation/self-compassion. Self-hug, hands on your heart.
8. Enhance the microbiome. Eat pre and probiotic foods or take a supplement.
9. Yoga and Tai Chi
10. Omega-3 fatty acids.
11. Moderate exercise, especially that involves using your legs – squats, walking, etc.
12. Zinc – grass fed beef, oysters, pumpkin seeds, cashews, almonds, mushrooms and spinach.
13. Massage or self-foot massage.
14. Socializing/laughing.
15. Speak in a slow calm voice or be around others who do.
16. Intermittent fasting.
17. Acupuncture – particularly ear points.
18. Hugs. Do a self-hug with right hand under left armpit and left hand on right shoulder.
19. Dance and play
20. Time in nature

More resources on Polyvagal Theory: <https://www.stephenporges.com>, <https://www.rhythmofregulation.com>

Helpful article about past trauma and the freeze response: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/evolution-the-self/201507/trauma-and-the-freeze-response-good-bad-or-both>