



Understanding Nervous System States

Notice your state. Name what you need. Choose one small regulating step.

A helpful way to notice your state

This is a simplified therapy map for recognizing patterns of activation and shutdown. It is not a literal map of vagal nerve anatomy.

HIGH ACTIVATION - FIGHT / FLIGHT

You may notice: anxiety, worry, irritability, anger, panic, restlessness, urgency, or wanting to escape.

Your body may feel: tense, keyed up, hot, shaky, fast, or ready to act.

Try: slower breathing, orienting to the room, movement, grounding, or reducing stimulation.

CONNECTED / PRESENT

You may notice: curiosity, openness, compassion, connection, flexibility, joy, or feeling grounded.

Your body may feel: settled enough to think, connect, listen, and respond rather than react.

Try: staying connected to supportive people, routines, movement, rest, and activities that help you feel present.

LOW ACTIVATION - FREEZE / SHUTDOWN

You may notice: numbness, disconnection, hopelessness, shame, heaviness, low energy, or feeling stuck.

Your body may feel: slowed down, collapsed, distant, foggy, or hard to mobilize.

Try: gentle movement, warmth, sensory grounding, small doable actions, and safe connection.

The goal is not to stay calm all the time

Nervous-system states shift. The skill is noticing where you are and choosing a small response that supports safety and flexibility.