

# What's My Nervous System Got To Do With It?

Do you realize that the way your nervous system reacts influences your thoughts, emotions, body sensations, and behaviors? Your nervous system has three different activation levels or “arousal zones”: 1) Too Fast (Dysregulated Hyperarousal) 2) Too Slow (Dysregulated Hypoarousal) and 3) Just Right (Regulated Optimal). Therefore, it's important to learn how to self-regulate your nervous system.

**1. Too Fast** - You end up here when your body kicks into high alert, when you're triggered into the fight or flight reaction. It doesn't matter if the threat is real or imagined; your nervous system automatically goes into hyperdrive. When your nervous system stays in the “too fast” zone, you may experience sleeping problems, difficulty concentrating, irritability, angry outbursts, panic and anxiety, increased heart and breathing rate, and the release of stress hormones. If your body were a car, it would be like “having your foot stuck on the gas pedal,” making many parts of your body run too fast.

**2. Too Slow** - When your nervous system becomes lethargic, you're in a “freeze” zone where you find yourself feeling shut down. If your nervous system stays stuck in that zone too long, you may start feeling like you're depressed or exhausted. It can be like your foot is stuck on the brake pedal of a car, causing you to go too slow. Symptoms that result from this might include lack of motivation, tiredness, feeling numb, and a sense of being detached from your thoughts, feelings, memories, behaviors and surroundings. This zone also makes you prone to think and feel in negative ways.

**3. Optimal Zone** - This is the zone where you want your nervous system to be most of the time, because in this zone you're able to tolerate and manage the stressors and challenges of life well. This is your resiliency zone, where you're able to bounce back from setbacks by using a champion's mind-set. The size of a person's Champ Zone can be wide or narrow. This depends on the different types of stressors the person has experienced. Everyone gets “bumped up” and “bumped down” out of the Champ Zone. When this happens it's important to observe this, and use calming and self-regulation skills to get your nervous system back into the Champ Zone so you can think, feel, and act in healthy, successful ways.

Here are 36 well-researched ways to calm and regulate your nervous system:

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|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1) Skybreathing      | 13) Progressive Muscle Relaxation | 25) Be Here Now Mindfulness    |
| 2) Physical Exercise | 14) Challenging Thinking Errors   | 26) Self-Compassion Practices  |
| 3) Restful Sleep     | 15) Grounding Techniques          | 27) Soothing Activities        |
| 4) Healthy Eating    | 16) Meditation                    | 28) Positive Social Support    |
| 5) Laughing          | 17) Listening To Music            | 29) Learning Something         |
| 6) Massage           | 18) Bilateral Stimulation/EMDR    | 30) Listen To Your Biorhythms  |
| 7) Yoga              | 19) Balance Your Personality      | 31) Do Something Slowly        |
| 8) Simple Stretching | 20) Standing On Your Head         | 32) Spend Time In Nature       |
| 9) Praying           | 21) Practicing Gratitude          | 33) Doing Acts Of Kindness     |
| 10) Humming          | 22) Imagine Your Peaceful Place   | 34) Focus On Positive Emotions |
| 11) Crafting         | 23) Deep Pressure Stimulation     | 35) Petting/Playing w/Animals  |
| 12) Neurofeedback    | 24) Positive Self-Talk            | 36) Spiritual Resources        |