

Activity

Calming the Nervous System

People: Ideally your whole group

Time: Approximately 1 hour to read and try out these Activities

Resources: These Activities and a place to meet

How Can This Help Us?

When we notice our Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) is preparing for danger — either because our heart is racing, breathing is shallow, and muscles are clenched (Activation) or because we're feeling spacey, far-away, or lethargic (Immobilization) — these activities help to send “safety” signals that allow our brain/bodies to return to a calm, alert resting state.

Lineage: Lots of somatic practitioners use these activities, and more, to regulate the ANS. For other great ideas, see Peter Levine's “Waking the Tiger.”

Activities

Movement

This doesn't mean you need to go to the gym or do a triathlon (although those are great options for some!). Any kind of moving — even very small or subtle — will help to release charge from your body.

Orient

Allow yourself to slowly look — or even move — around the space you are in. Notice details, such as colours, textures, light, shapes. Notice where the entrances, exits, and other people are. Really take your time. If you can do this with a partner, describe what you're seeing out loud to them.

Push

Push with your hands against a (firm) wall. At the same time, you may wish to push into the floor with your feet. Notice the feeling of pressure in your joints: wrists, elbows, and shoulders; ankles, knees, and hips. Notice if you want to increase or decrease the pressure, and adjust your pushing accordingly.

Lengthen Exhale

Make your exhale longer than your inhale. You might want to count to 4 for the inhale and to 6 for the exhale, or whatever count feels right for you, to ensure you're doing this. Repeat for 3 - 5 minutes. You might even want to make a “Vooo” sound as you exhale, to help your body relax even more.

The Body-Informed Leadership Series teaches the paradigms and practices that help us attune to, and be in skillful relationship with, our body's signals as a crucial domain of leadership in our group cultures.

www.BodyIntelligence.ca