

Nervous System Regulation

The **vagus nerve box breath** is a specific form of diaphragmatic breathing aimed at stimulating the vagus nerve, which is central to regulating the parasympathetic nervous system. Here's how it works:

1. **Inhale for four counts:** Breathe in deeply through your nose, expanding the belly to engage the diaphragm.
2. **Hold for four counts:** Hold the breath gently, allowing the oxygen to permeate.
3. **Exhale for four or six counts:** Exhale slowly and completely through the mouth, which helps activate the vagus nerve by extending the exhale.
4. **Hold for four counts:** Hold the breath with your lungs empty, grounding the body and allowing a gentle pause.

This breathing technique is often called “four-four-four” due to its sequence but can also include an extended exhale, (6 counts) which amplifies relaxation. Repeating this sequence for several cycles can encourage a deeper parasympathetic (rest-and-digest) state, allowing your body to recalibrate.

Other Breathing Techniques for Nervous System Regulation

1. **4-7-8 Breathing:** Inhale for four counts, hold for seven, and exhale for eight. This slows the heart rate and calms the mind.
2. **Diaphragmatic Breathing:** Breathe deeply with a focus on expanding the diaphragm rather than shallow chest breathing. This natural, gentle movement of the diaphragm activates the vagus nerve and stabilizes the nervous system.
3. **Alternate Nostril Breathing (Nadi Shodhana):** Using your thumb and ring finger, alternate between closing one nostril and then the other. Inhale through one nostril, then switch to exhale through the other.

This balances both hemispheres of the brain and soothes the nervous system.

4. **Resonant Breathing:** Breathe at a pace of five to six breaths per minute (usually with a 5.5-second inhale and 5.5-second exhale). This pace aligns heart rate variability (HRV) and helps promote calm and stability.

These techniques, especially when practiced consistently, can be incredibly effective in restoring nervous system balance, supporting emotional resilience, and deepening relaxation.

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