

# CALMING YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM *with deep breaths*



## MEET YOUR VAGUS NERVE

Most of us know that taking deep breaths will help us feel calmer, but why? In short, deep breaths directly stimulate your vagus nerve which sends a signal to your nervous system to chill out.

## WHAT IS IT?

Your vagus nerve is one of the most important nerves in your body. It is a superhighway that sprawls out from the brain and into the body like an intricate network of roots - connecting your brain, heart, gut, immune system, and many other organs. These nerve networks act as lines of communication between the brain and body's many systems and organs.

**The vagus nerve is responsible for many of the "rest and digest" (parasympathetic) nervous system functions in the body.** These include slowing your heart rate, regulating blood pressure, stimulating digestion, suppressing inflammation, and creating a shift in the body that helps reduce anxious or depressed mind states.



## HOW DO DEEP BREATHS MAKE ME FEEL CALMER?

By taking slow, deep, deliberate breaths from the belly, we can intentionally stimulate the vagus nerve. Diaphragmatic (deep) breathing can be done anytime, anywhere and helps immediately calm your nervous system and welcome relaxation into your body.

Deep breathing is often folded into meditation practice and is a concrete and effective way to lower stress levels (via vagus nerve stimulation). Instead of trying to "think" your way out of feeling stressed or anxious, you can stimulate the vagus nerve and send a signal to your nervous system that it's okay to relax or downshift. This, in turn, can calm both your mind and body and help you feel more at ease.

*As irritating as it can be to have someone say to you, "Just take some deep breaths"....well, now at least you know why :)*

