



# CONNECTION IMPACTS OXYTOCIN PRODUCTION



When oxytocin levels get low, especially during relationship conflict, fears of abandonment, c-PTSD triggers or social stress, our nervous system detects a survival threat, triggering fight-or-flight-or-freeze and the associated stress neurochemicals, hormones and emotions like anxiety, panic, shame and loneliness.



Similar to how we have nutrition and vitamin needs, we have various Social Connection Needs. Without food, we get hunger pains. With vitamin deficiencies we have symptoms. Without fulfilling our connection needs we experience 'hunger pains' and symptoms like emptiness, shame, anxiety, irritability, fog, depression.

**FULFILLED LEVELS**  
WHEN OUR MIND FEELS  
CONNECTION NEEDS  
ARE MET ENOUGH

Connection Needs Include  
Sense of Belonging, Purpose,  
Inspiration, Security, Freedom,  
Gratitude/Receiving, Respect  
and Valued by Loved-ones



OXYTOCIN  
BUCKET

**LOW LEVELS**  
**FIGHT-OR-FLIGHT**  
SURVIVAL RESPONSE

**VERY LOW LEVELS**  
**FREEZE**  
SURVIVAL RESPONSE  
FEELS LIKE DEPRESSION, ADD,  
PATHOLOGICAL LONELINESS, 'I  
AM BAD' OR 'UNLOVABLE' TYPE  
BELIEFS & FEELINGS (SHAME)

## FULFILLING CONNECTION IS ABOUT HAVING A 'SENSE' AND A FEELING

Connection starvation pain feels like anxiety, emptiness or shame. It can make us 'give up' as in Freeze Mode, dropping us into symptoms of clinical depression. It is important to realize we have many layers of connection needs, similar to nutrition.

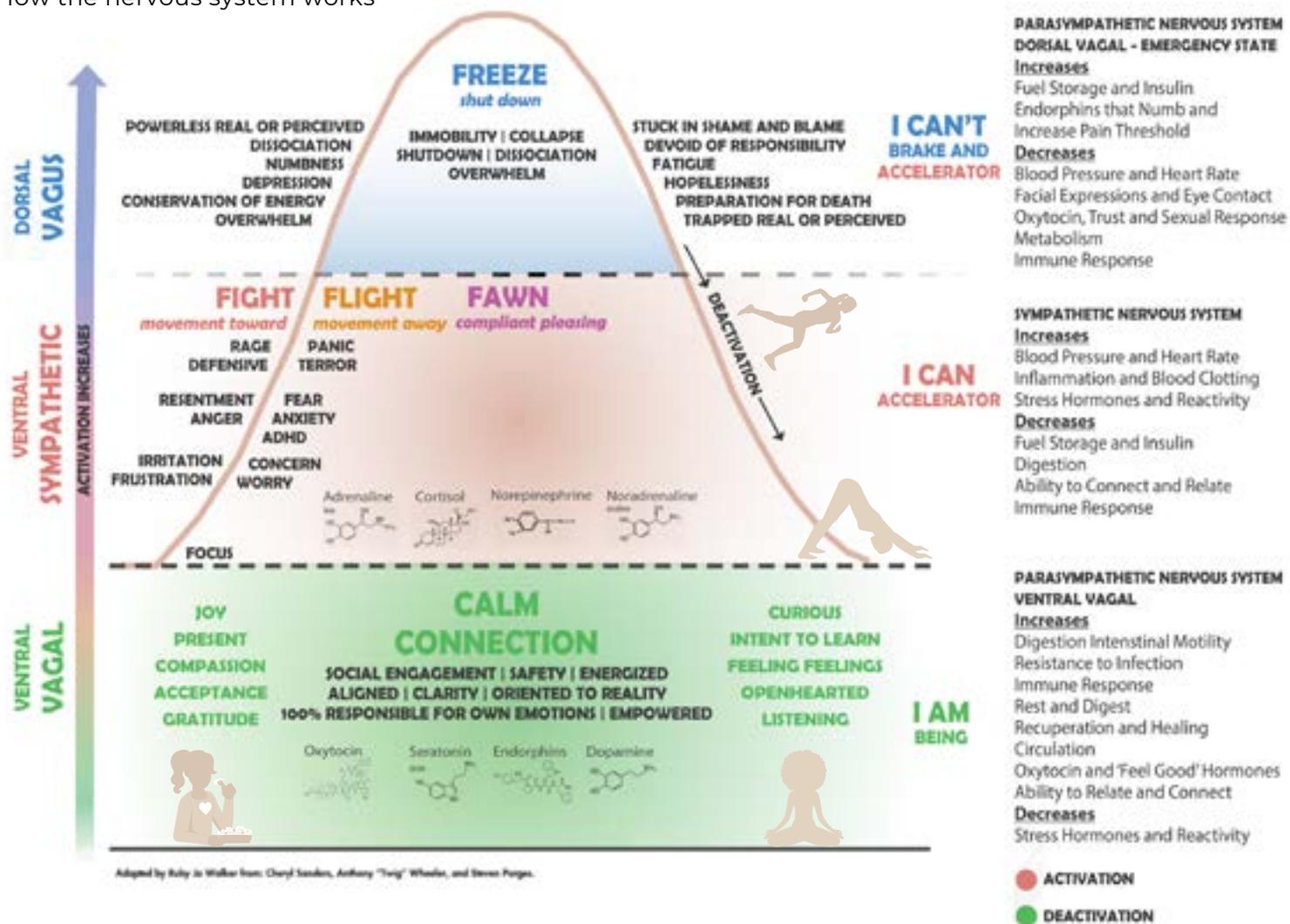
The key is to be aware of our human connection needs and ensure we are fulfilling as many as possible on a daily basis or have an intentional plan to do so long-term. You will notice connection needs have more to do with "SENSE" and "FEELING" connection than actual facts. For example, **you could be surrounded by 100 people but feel zero connection** (in fact that can cause more anxiety than connection). Whereas, enjoying time in nature by yourself can make you feel a true Sense of Belonging with nature.

# WHY ACTION AND ACTION-ORIENTED SELF-CARE HEALS

Taking ACTION, like physical activity works because of physics and physiology.

See image below. Trying to meditate, 'chill' or be 'happy' during highly activated fight-or-flight states can be counterproductive and frustrating! The nervous system tends to activate more! Process the stress hormones and neurochemicals with ACTION first so you can quite literally 'flight' to CALM.

How the nervous system works



You can also see why action-oriented, self-care like simple comforts, yoga, acceptance practices and gratitude work to allow for more CALM and less susceptibility for fight-or-flight states (chronic stress). Having Wise Mind and awareness to feel your feelings and nervous system activation in each moment is imperative to be proactive and prevent high stress states.



# OXYTOCIN BOOSTERS



Oxytocin, the 'tend and befriend' hormone is not produced unless we're present with all five senses.

**Dr Lucy Brown**

# OXYTOCIN BOOSTERS



- 1 Kind eye contact - even with strangers
- 2 Creativity - paint, drum, doodle, etc.
- 3 Surprise someone with a gift
- 4 Being trusted by being trustworthy
- 5 Openhearted Listening with curiosity
- 6 Daydream for 5 minutes
- 7 Share genuine wants and dreams with someone you trust
- 8 Laugh, watch comedies, tell jokes, etc.
- 9 Play how kids play! Spontaneous and silly, but don't force happy when sad, faking happy has opposite impact
- 10 Cry when you feel like crying
- 11 Pet your pet for at least 5 minutes
- 12 Receive gifts/kindness with gratitude
- 13 Daily gratitude journal
- 14 Conscious deep breathing (shallow breathing ignites fight-or-flight)
- 15 Square Breathing practice
- 16 Quality time with friends or loved ones
- 17 Share a meal with loved ones, friends
- 18 Words of encouragement to yourself
- 19 Words of encouragement to another
- 20 Receive words of encouragement
- 21 Daily allowance of Magnesium, Vitamins C, D
- 22 Lactobacillus reuteri increases oxytocin
- 23 Daily melatonin supplement 500 mcg
- 24 Massage - giving and receiving
- 25 Self-Compassion or Inner Child Meditations
- 26 Journal, free-write, Inner Connecting
- 27 Mindful Self-Compassion practices

# OXYTOCIN BOOSTERS



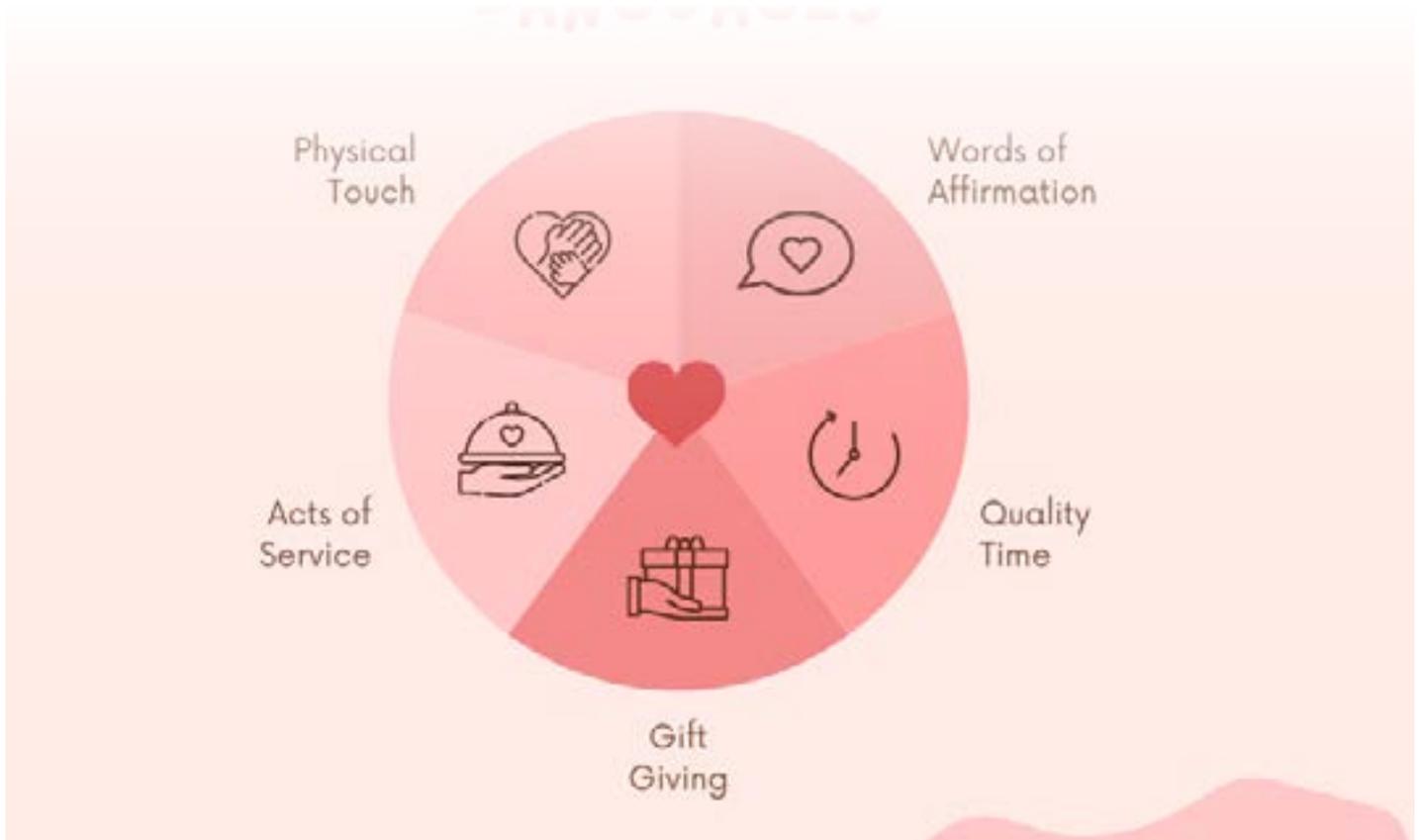
- 28** Meditate for others, Metta Meditation
- 29** Pray and praying for others
- 30** Walk outside
- 31** Tell those you love, you love them
- 32** Enjoy a warm bath or shower, bath is better
- 33** Hug for 20 seconds 8 hugs a day is ideal
- 34** Random acts of kindness, give to a charity
- 35** Creative focus, garden, read, etc.
- 36** Watch a movie (with character development)
- 37** Jasmine and lavender essential oil scents
- 38** Exercise in warm temperatures, sweating
- 39** Yoga stimulates vagus nerve for oxytocin
- 40** Sing for 30 minutes
- 41** Prepare and eat brightly colored food
- 42** Tasting food, tongue receptors boost oxytocin
- 43** Mindfully feel full - food in your gut releases a hormone to stimulate vagus nerve and oxytocin
- 44** Being outside in nature
- 45** Listen to slow-tempo music
- 46** Cuddle with someone you care about
- 47** Hold hands with someone you care about
- 48** Something exciting with someone, like a road trip, shooting guns or riding a rollercoaster
- 49** Tandem skydiving - a 200% oxytocin spike!
- 50** Acts of service, like making dinner
- 51** Say thank you, give appreciation
- 52** Simple Comforts and Action-Oriented Self-Care
- 53** Allow and feel emotions in present moment
- 54** Sex (women get an oxytocin boost - resulting in bonding; men get a dopamine rush - resulting in 'wanting more' and oxytocin with those they've already formed an emotional bond with)

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# ACTION-ORIENTED SELF-CARE

This practice applies The Five Love Languages to create a loving relationships with yourself through action-oriented methods. Love is a verb. It is seen, heard, and felt. It is essential to be loving towards ourselves. In fact, it is our #1 job, along with ensuring safety. If you are not prioritizing and 'actionally loving' yourself, you will inevitably have symptoms - mental, emotional, physiological, behavioral, relational and physical.



## YOU MAY NOTICE FEELING LONELY OR EVEN ANXIETY AT FIRST

It is common to feel lonely, sad or anxious when you first start practicing intentional self-care. This is due to years of being externally focused - focus on other people, work, traffic, deadlines, bills, impressing others, the way we appear to others, accomplishing things that will be rewarded, etc. All of this external focus results self-neglect and emotional self-neglect. Taking time to focus internally can trigger feelings of loneliness and anxiety because you are literally focused purely on your Self and nothing else. With daily practice, you will notice the 'feel good' hormones like oxytocin. The proof is in the feeling.

# SELF-LOVE *examples*

You cannot get self-love from outside yourself - not from others, not from awards nor validation, not from the past or future. Self-love exists in the present moment. It is intentional and action-oriented. Here are a few examples of Self-Love Languages.

## **QUALITY TIME**

What do you enjoy doing with your free-time? Possibilities are endless. Enjoy a bath, a walk, coffee, movie, music, people-watching, travel, etc.

## **WORDS OF AFFIRMATION**

Use words to appreciate, understand, compliment, and encourage yourself. Journaling is also powerfully loving and affirming.

## **ACTS OF SERVICE**

There are infinite possibilities to be of service to yourself! Clean your home, prepare a meal, brush your teeth, organize your closet, fold your laundry, etc.

## **PHYSICAL TOUCH**

Cuddling with a cozy blanket or even a stuffed animal, applying body lotion, enjoying a pedicure, getting a massage, hugs, and other sensory pleasures.

## **RECEIVING GIFTS**

Giving yourself gifts can be incredibly satisfying. From saving up for your dream car, to buying a cute t-shirt, to buying your favorite cereal.

# self-care QUALITY TIME

It's easier to show love toward others than toward ourselves. I'm not advocating a narcissistic type of self-love but an attitude of compassion and acceptance toward yourself. Without self-compassion and self-acceptance, we can never truly feel at peace.

Deb Chitwood

## What does quality time with yourself look like?

Learning to enjoy quality time with yourself is one of the most empowering, self-loving ways of being. It takes the focus off others and brings the focus towards your Self. It is intentional and present. You'll know you're doing it right, when you literally feel a sense of connection and compassion for yourself, even if it's for a moment.

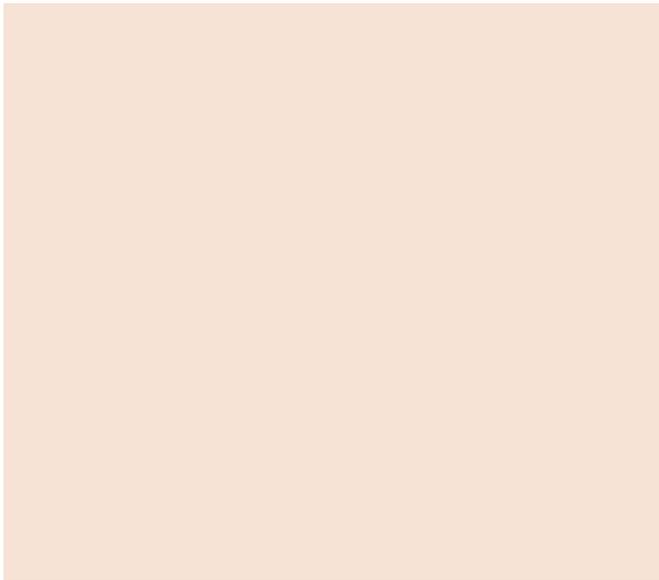
Spending quality time with ourselves can feel lonely at first. As a social species we have a need to be with others, to impress people, to be liked, and to 'fit-in.' This is why feeling alone, or the mere threat of rejection or not belonging, is so painful.

Yet, if we keep running from feeling alone, we lose our balance, rely way too much on others, while also abandoning ourselves. Can you imagine leaving every time your best friend wants to spend time with you? Your friend would not feel liked or loved by you. Abandoning yourself every time you feel lonely, instead of enjoying alone time, is the opposite of self-loving.

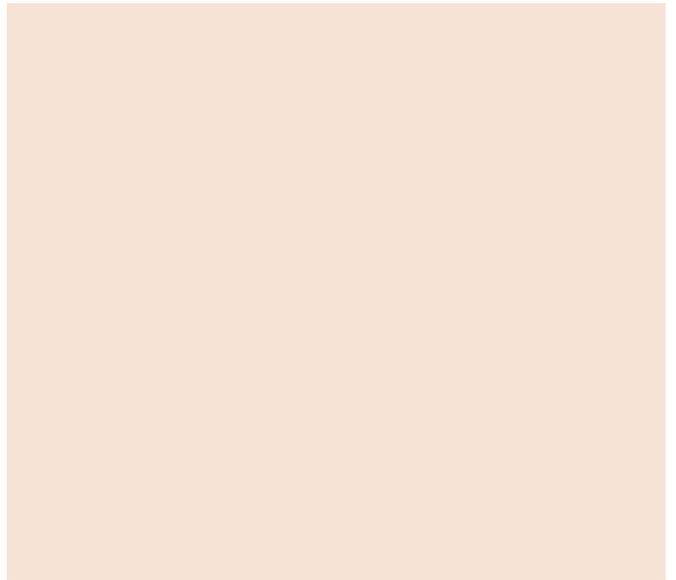


# self-care QUALITY TIME

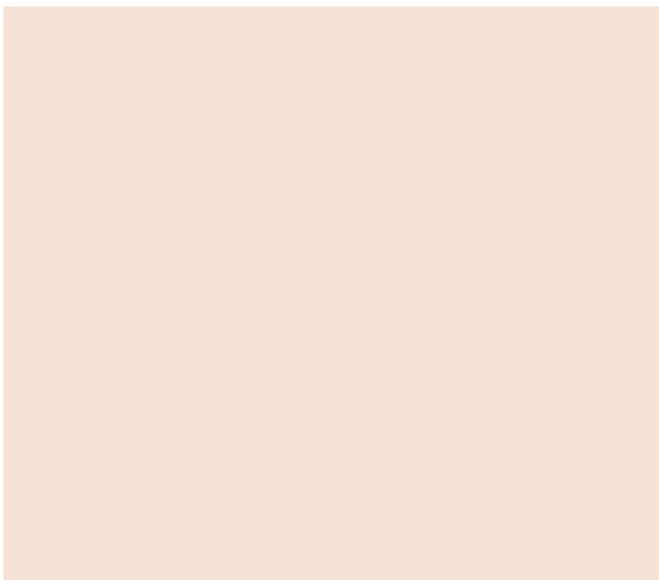
Imagine a full day to yourself to do what you want. What would you do? Possibilities are endless. Enjoy a bath, walk, hike, travels, coffee near a river, sleeping. Free-write ideas.



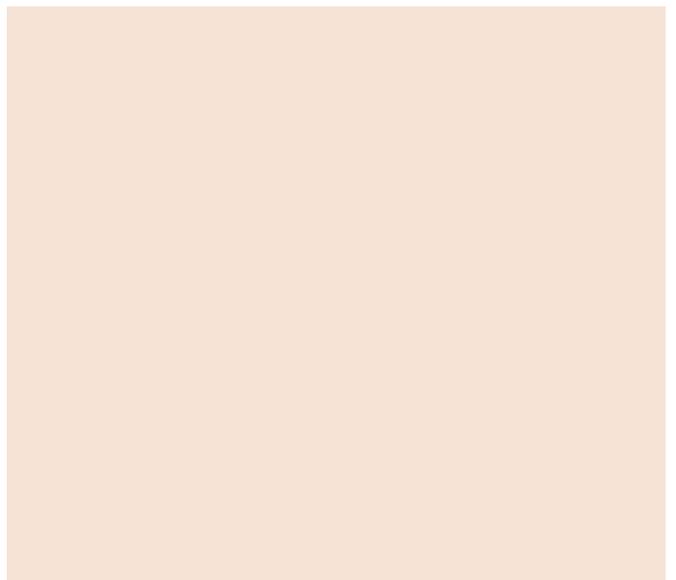
What do you enjoy doing with your freetime? What would you do if you had more freetime? What do you want to make sure you do more of on a daily basis?



What did you enjoy doing as a child? Recall and describe enjoyable moments you had as a child spending alone time. What things can you do now to enjoy time with yourself?



List bucket list items! Unique and big experiences you want to do in life, travels, adventures, big goals, and aspirations. Take a moment to dream big. More ideas the better.



# self-care ACTS OF SERVICE

I have come to believe that caring for myself is not self-indulgent. Caring for myself is an act of survival.

Audre Lorde

## **What does Acts of Service for yourself look like?**

Similar to Quality Time, but more action-oriented. Be of service to yourself! Ideas include cleaning your home, making your bed, preparing a meal, brushing your teeth, and organizing your closet.

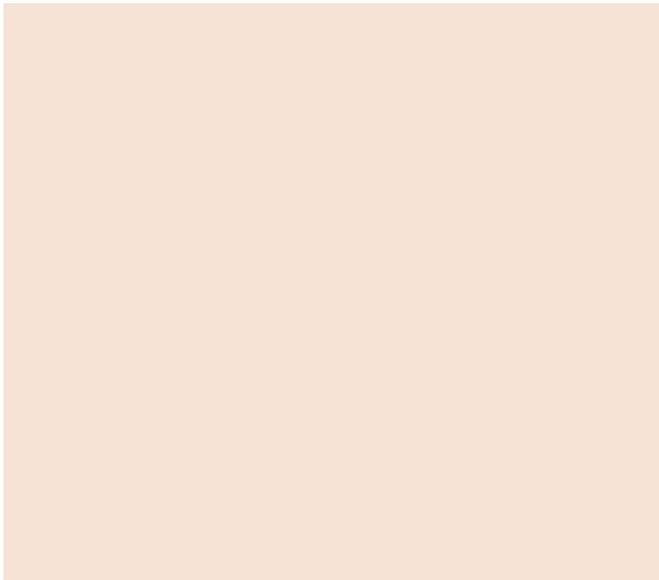
Acts of Services can also include going above and beyond what we would normally do for ourselves. If you make coffee every morning, make it extra special by adding whipped cream or cinnamon sprinkles.

A personal note, Acts of Service was hard for me after my separation. Making dinner for just myself made me feel awfully lonely. But with time, I realized I might as well prepare my meals to the fullest. I had to eat, so why not make it enjoyable. I started making homemade tortillas, colorful salads and fun spritzers with different fruits like grapefruit, strawberry spritzers. Have compassion for your loneliness and provide kind services to yourself anyways.

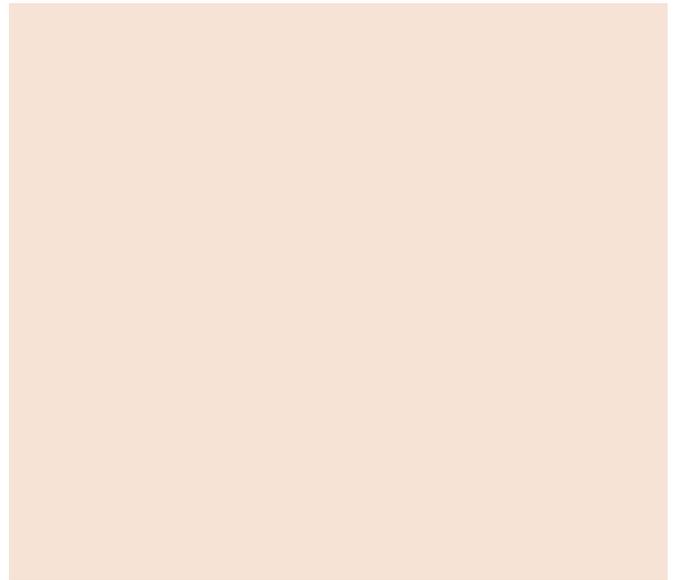


# *self-care* ACTS OF SERVICE

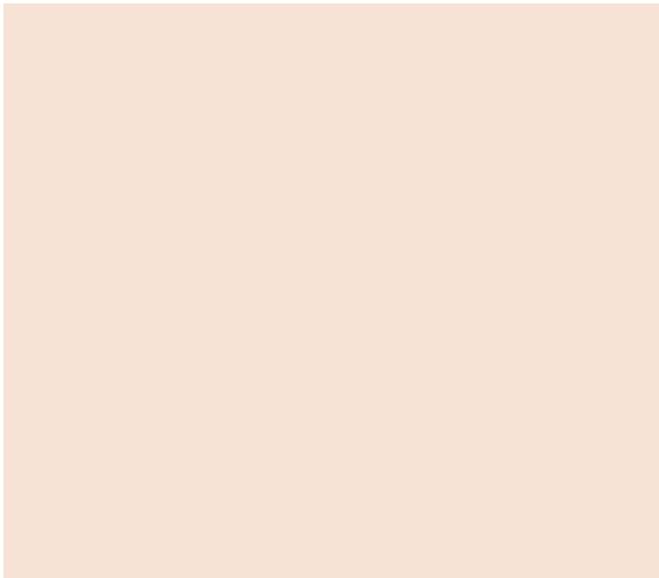
What actions are you already doing on daily basis that ensure you are taking care good care of your health? What things do you want to do more of, for your own health?



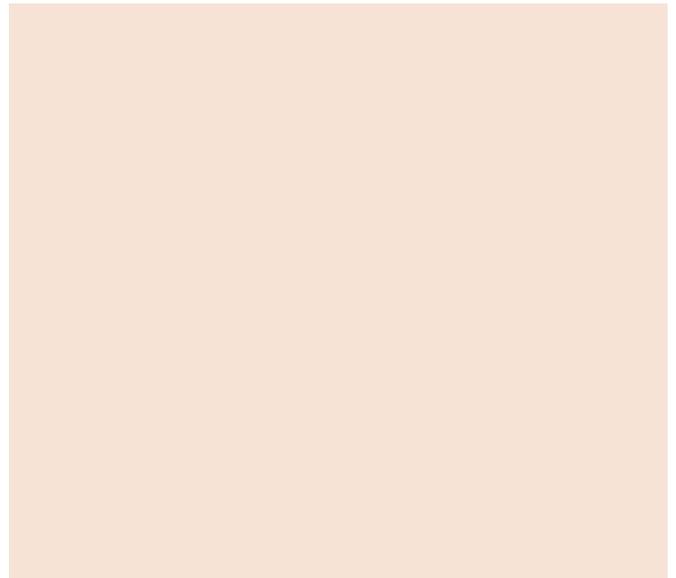
How important is it to you to have a clean, organized home and life? What chores are most important to you? What areas in life are you wanting to be more organized in?



Describe a time someone did something kind for you. How did it feel? Describe a time you did something kind for a friend or family member. Why was this meaningful?



Freewrite more ideas to provide yourself with consistent acts of service. Making meal, morning smoothie or behaviors you want to add to your Daily Routine, Work Routine, etc.



# self-care PHYSICAL TOUCH

You yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection.

Sharon Salzberg

## **What does for Physical, Comforting Touch for yourself look like?**

Cuddling with a blanket, applying lotion, pedicure, sensual pleasures and more. Touch is one of our 5 senses (touch, smell, taste, see, and hear). To ensure you are providing yourself with comforting and pleasurable sensory experiences is an essential component for self-love.

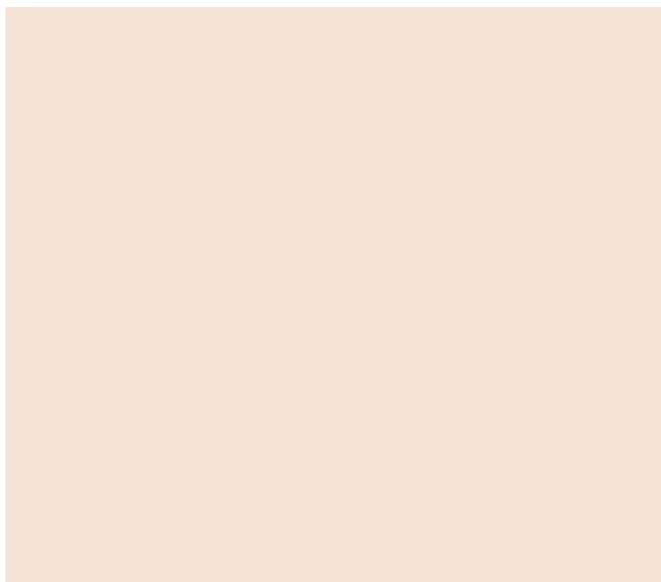
In fact, children who are not getting their sensory needs met, experience more anxiety and what is labeled as AD(H)D type symptoms. Stress balls, fidget spinners, slime and other sensory toys are proven to reduce anxiety and provide calm.

The same goes for adults. Physical Touch isn't just sex. It involves tactile activities that satisfy sensory needs and wants, like finger painting, pottery, coloring, gardening, and baking.

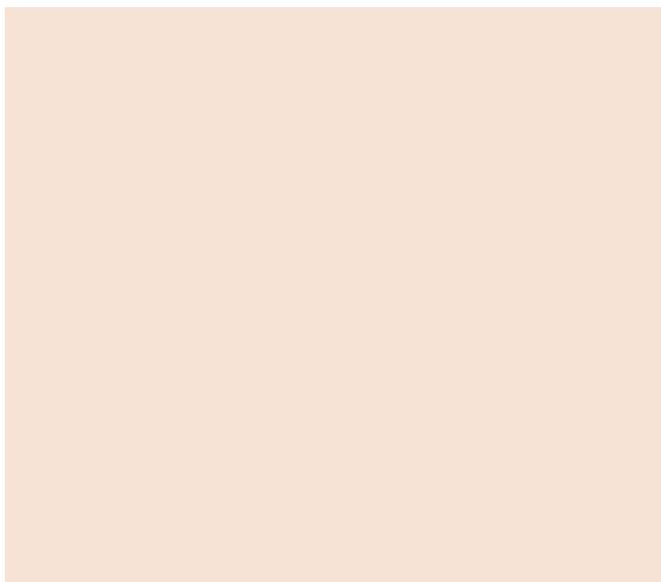


# self-care PHYSICAL TOUCH

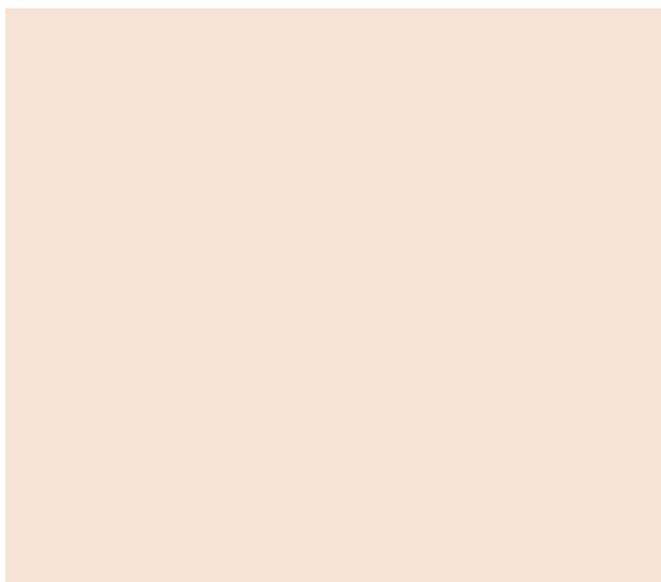
List things that make you feel comfy. Snuggling with a soft blanket in pj's? A warm bubble bath? Yoga? Exfoliating? Applying lotion? Getting a pedicure or a massage?



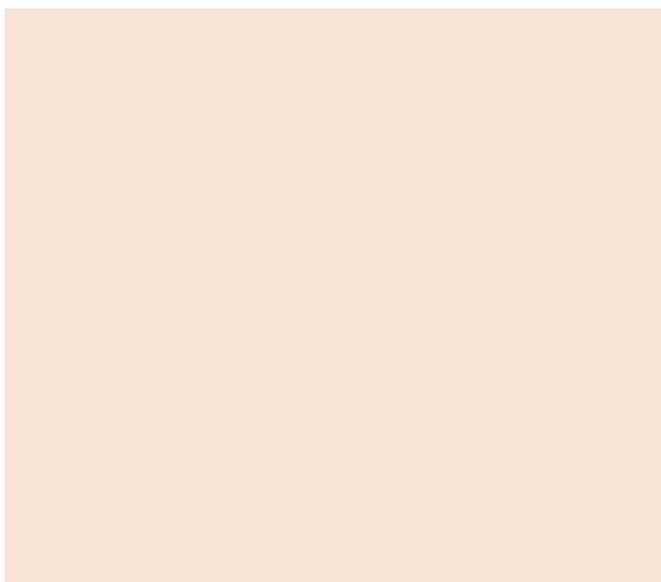
What sensory (hands-on) and creative activities did you enjoy as child, coloring, play-doe, sandbox, finger-painting? What do you enjoy now? What do you want more of?



Explore Mindful Self-Compassion (MSC) Supportive Touch practices. Write down ideas. **Save this document before clicking on link.**  
<https://self-compassion.org/exercise-4-supportive-touch>



Summarize your ideas on providing more comforting touch and sensory experiences with action-oriented self-care. View the Oxytocin Boosters list above for more ideas.



# self-care THOUGHTFUL GIFTS

Love is a verb... something you do. Love - the feeling - is a fruit of love the verb.

Stephen Covey, PhD

## **What does for Thoughtful Gifts for yourself look like?**

Giving yourself gifts can be incredibly satisfying. From saving up for your dream car, collecting and cherishing jewelry, to buying a simple, comfy t-shirt, or even getting your favorite cereal. Obviously, we need to be especially careful with this one, due to modern conveniences it is easy to buy ourselves things! It is likely this is the one, out of the five love languages, that you are already doing a lot of. So the key word here is 'thoughtful' gifts.

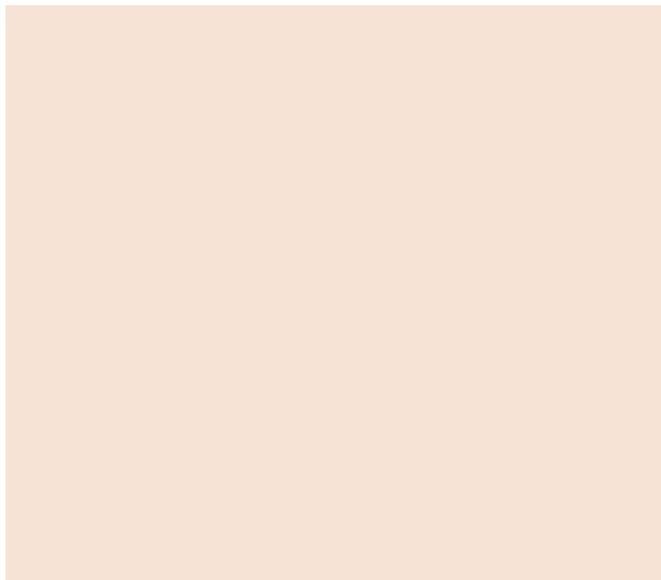
Having a plan for what you are wanting to give yourself and buy yourself in terms of gifts can make all the difference. Like planning and saving up for a vacation, or a house, a new bed or a car. Even if it takes years to save the money, it is the thought... and the planning that counts.

Buying something consistent, like weekly flowers, is also a good example of how thoughtful gifts for yourself is loving, and not just spending money. Use the questions on the following page to help define what thoughtful gifts are important, balanced and loving for you.

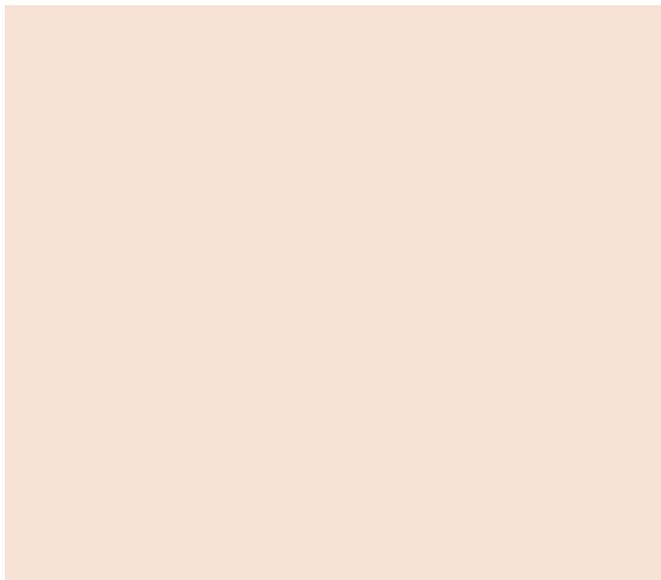


# *self-care* THOUGHTFUL GIFTS

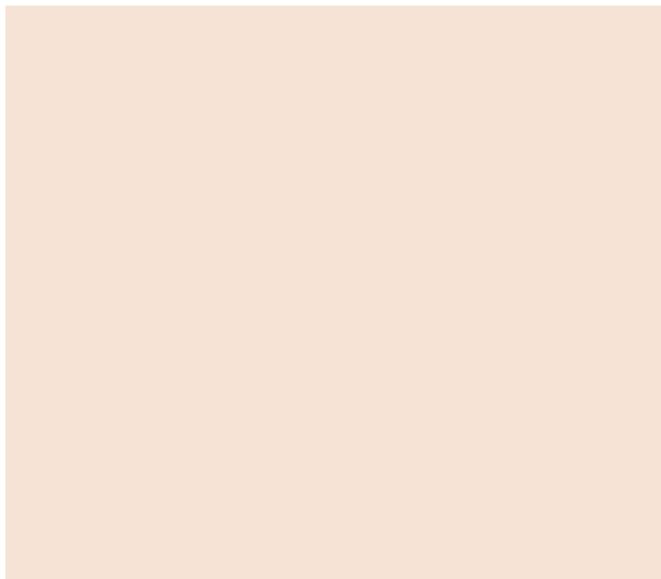
What things bring you joy - items you can purchase? Certain snacks and foods, decor, clothes, moisturizers, candles, fresh fruit, beauty items, valuables?



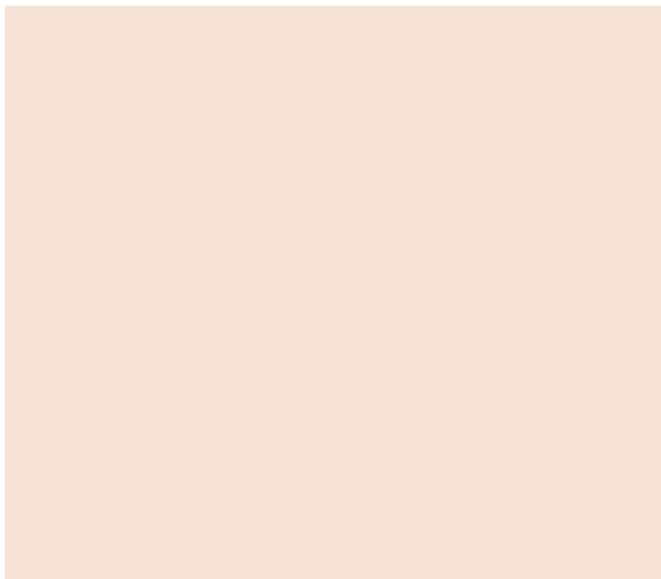
Do you have any collections? Did you collect anything as a child, like a sticker collection? Is there a collection you'd like to start now that you think about it?



What things do you want to make sure you regularly buy and give to yourself? Fresh flowers, daily coffee, etc.?



What bigger or more valuable items have you been dreaming about getting? A new home, car, dream vacation?



self-care

# WORDS OF AFFIRMATION/ APPRECIATION

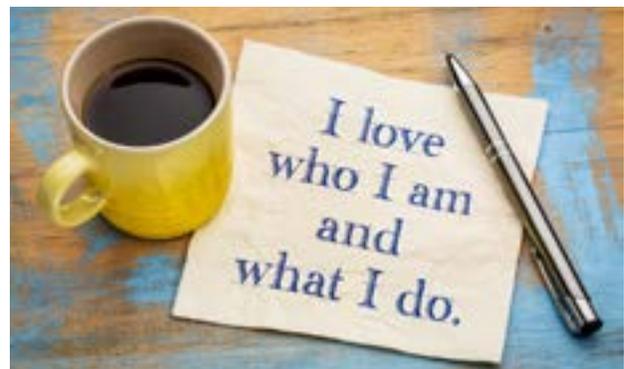


## **What kind of Words of Affirmation are meaningful to you?**

Words of Affirmation entail speaking and writing to yourself through journaling in order to appreciate, understand, and encourage yourself. You have likely heard about the power of Affirmations and saying kind things to yourself.

Although, this one thing is not enough to have total emotional and mental health, it certainly has scientifically proven benefits. Think of it as one ingredient in the recipe for self-love, self-trust and self-actualization.

Instead of generic positive affirmations, decide what you uniquely need and want in terms of supporting and affirming yourself. What areas of your life do you feel are deserving of affirming? What aspects do you feel proud of? What aspects need more encouraging? Discover ways to provide yourself with meaningful Words of Affirmation.



self-care

## WORDS OF AFFIRMATION/APPRECIATION

What do you feel most proud of? Being a hard-worker, paying the bills on time, keeping a clean house, being responsible? Are you proud of your high values? Are you always there when your friends need you?

What areas in your life are you feeling unappreciated or not noticed how hard your working, caring, etc.? If you could get the validation and appreciation you're truly wanting, what would it be for?

Describe a time you were told how much you were respected or appreciated. What did they say? How did it feel? What made this important to you? How can you give yourself more appreciation like this?

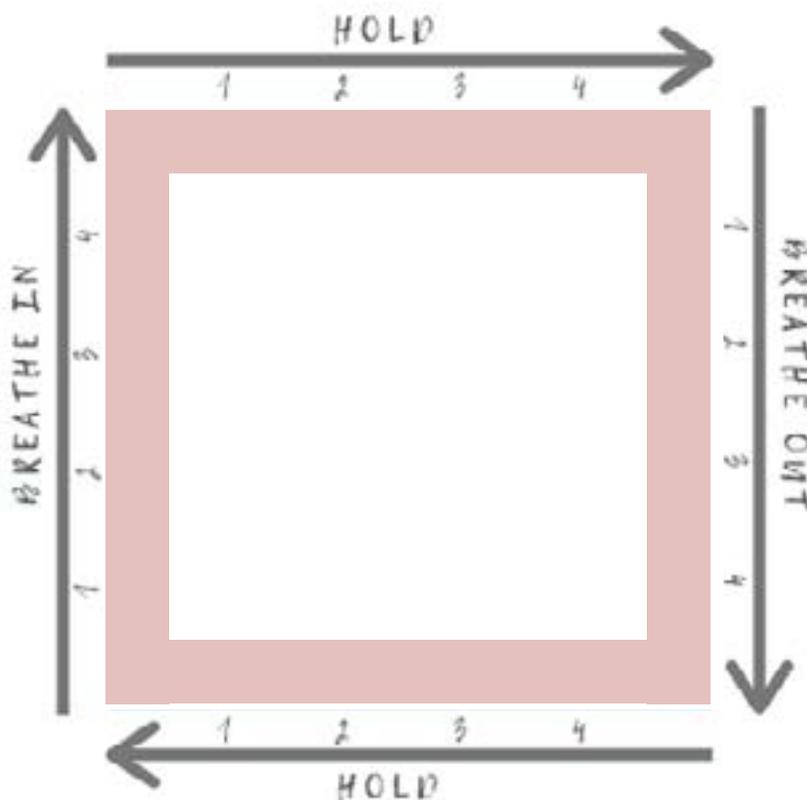
Describe a person who encouraged or inspired you, a friend, teacher, parent, etc. What did they say that was supportive? What did they see in you? How do you want to encourage yourself more? What words help?

# CENTERING PRACTICES

Evidence-based Grounding Practices and Breathing Practices to deactivate your flight-or-flight nervous system response. Although simple, these exercises help stimulate the Vagus Nerve for CALM (see image on previous page)

## 1 SQUARE BREATHING

1. Gently inhale through your nose to a slow count of 4
2. Hold at the top of the breath for a count of 4
3. Then gently exhale through your mouth for a count of 4
4. At the bottom of the breath, pause and hold for the count of 4



# CENTERING PRACTICES

Evidence-based Grounding Practices and Breathing Practices to deactivate your flight-or-flight nervous system response. Although simple, these exercises help stimulate the Vagus Nerve for CALM (see image on previous page)

## 2 FIVE SENSES

1. Notice FIVE things you SEE around you
2. Notice FOUR things you can TOUCH around you
3. Notice THREE things you HEAR
4. Notice TWO things you can SMELL
5. Notice ONE thing you can TASTE

5 4 3 2 1

**SLOW DOWN & CALM DOWN**  
FIRST- TAKE 3 SLOW BELLY BREATHS!

5 List 5 things you can SEE 

4 List 4 things you can FEEL 

3 List 3 things you can HEAR 

2 List 2 things you can SMELL 

1 List something you like to TASTE 

**FINISHED? - TAKE ANOTHER 3 SLOW BELLY BREATHS**

# CENTERING PRACTICES

Evidence-based Grounding Practices and Breathing Practices to deactivate your flight-or-flight nervous system response. Although simple, these exercises help stimulate the Vagus Nerve for CALM (see image on previous page)

## 3 FEEL YOUR FEET



1. You may sit or stand for this practice, it is best to do on grass or soil
2. Place your awareness on the bottom of your feet
3. Feel the weight of your body
4. Experience your senses and any sensations

## 4 MASSAGE YOUR FEET



1. Massaging your feet has an automatic calming effect
2. You may use a massage oil with lavender or your favorite lotion
3. Be sure to have intentional focus on how your feet feel
4. Take this a step further and research reflexology points if you'd like

# CENTERING PRACTICES

Evidence-based Grounding Practices and Breathing Practices to deactivate your flight-or-flight nervous system response. Although simple, these exercises help stimulate the Vagus Nerve for CALM.

## 5 COVER YOUR CROWN

1. Simple as can be! Yet proven to be effective. If you feel shattering, ungrounded, anxious, panicked, or foggy use this as needed.
2. Place one hand over the crown your head for 90 seconds. You may also close your eyes if you like.



## 6 COOL SHOWER

1. Short exposure to cold temperature has been shown to have many health benefits, such as increased immunity and improved mood.
2. It only takes about 30 seconds of cooler water at the end of your typical warm shower.

