



# Ways to Improve Your Vagal Tone

**The Vagus nerve is a bundle of cranial nerves that wanders all the way from the brainstem into the stomach. Stimulating this nerve stimulates all 3 Centers – body, heart, and head. When we do these exercises, we can improve vagal tone. Each of these exercises can work to increase vagal tone, open the centers, increasing heart rate variability, ultimately calming our nervous system and opening to relaxation.**

1. Exposure to cold water – showers, swimming in cold waters, even a splash of cold water on your face
2. Singing or chanting or humming. Done in unison increases heart rate variability. Singing also activates throat muscles
3. Laughter increases heart rate variability
4. Yoga – there are many types of yoga that all seem to be helpful and the traditional practice in of stretching and breathing simultaneously stimulates vagal tone
5. Tai chi which increases heart rate variability
6. Breathing - deep and slow - 6 breaths/ minute that's 5 seconds on both inhale and exhale
7. Activating the 3Ms with a positive affirmation activating all 3 Centers
  - Movement: "May You (I) be able to move with ease and flexibility"
  - Meaningful Connections: "May You (I) enjoy meaningful connection with myself and others"
  - Mindfulness: "My You (I) be mindful as I move throughout today"
8. Various types of meditation
  - Sitting quietly
  - Listening to music
  - Guided meditation
  - Walking a labyrinth
  - Reciting a mantra
9. Sighing out loud with a long deep exhale
10. Chewing your food slowly and well activating the state of digestion while resting
11. Light exercise – to create movement in all systems of your body
12. Gargling – stimulating muscles in the back of the throat and gastrointestinal tract
13. Enjoying the experience after having a good bowel movement
14. Auricular acupuncture of the ear to stimulate the area of vagal tone
15. Balancing your microbiome in your gut – taking a quality probiotic to create a healthy environment in your gut where many mood-altering chemicals are created.
16. Qigong which increases heart rate variability
17. Intermittent fasting which improves heart rate variability
18. Lymphatic Massage – to move lymph and toxins from your body
19. Dancing
20. Abstain from alcohol consumption
21. Maintain routines
22. Volunteer helping others in an environment where you feel safe and supported, i.e. animal shelters
23. Practice telling others what you need by first identifying your personal boundaries
24. Spend time in nature