

What is the Vagus Nerve?

The **vagus nerve** is like a “superhighway” that connects your brain to many parts of your body—especially your heart, lungs, and digestive system. It helps control things you don’t usually think about, like your heartbeat, breathing, and how your stomach digests food.

It’s also a big part of your **relaxation system**. When the vagus nerve is working well, it helps calm you down after stress, lowers your heart rate, and supports healthy digestion. That’s why deep breathing, meditation, and humming can make you feel more relaxed—they gently “massage” or activate the vagus nerve.

So, you can think of the vagus nerve as your body’s built-in **calm switch and communication line** between the brain and body.

The opposite of stimulating the vagus nerve is activating the sympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for the body’s “fight or flight” response. While the vagus nerve is a key component of the parasympathetic nervous system, which promotes “rest and digest” functions, the sympathetic nervous system prepares the body for stress or danger. This includes increasing heart rate, blood pressure, and respiratory rate, which are the physiological opposites of the calming effects induced by vagus nerve stimulation.

In our society, most of us would benefit from stimulating the vagus nerve vs activating the sympathetic nervous system.

Benefits of Stimulating the Vagus Nerve

Regularly stimulating the vagus nerve can bring a wide range of health benefits, including:

- **Lower stress and anxiety** through activation of the parasympathetic (“rest and digest”) system
- **Improved digestion** by enhancing gut-brain communication
- **Better sleep quality** by helping the body shift out of fight-or-flight mode
- **Enhanced mood** and emotional balance
- **Reduced inflammation** by regulating immune system responses
- **Stronger heart health** with improved heart rate variability
- **Greater resilience** to life’s daily challenges

Simple Ways to Stimulate the Vagus Nerve

1. Deep Breathing

Slow, diaphragmatic breathing signals safety to your body. Try inhaling through your nose for a count of four, holding for a count of four, and exhaling slowly for a count of six to eight.

2. Singing, Humming, or Chanting

Because the vagus nerve connects to the vocal cords, activities like singing, humming, or chanting can activate it. Even softly humming your favorite tune can help calm your system.

3. Cold Exposure

Splashing cold water on your face or finishing your shower with 30 seconds of cold water can give the vagus nerve a gentle reset and improve resilience.

4. Gargling

This simple act activates the muscles in the back of the throat, which are connected to the vagus nerve. Regular gargling can also support throat and digestive health.

5. Meditation and Mindfulness

Practices that quiet the mind—such as meditation, yoga, or prayer—stimulate the vagus nerve and strengthen the body's relaxation response.

6. Gentle Movement

Yoga, tai chi, and walking all activate the parasympathetic nervous system through vagal stimulation, reducing stress and improving mood. If you do this in nature, all the better.

7. Social Connection and Laughter

The vagus nerve responds positively to safe, supportive social interactions. Sharing a laugh or spending time with loved ones can literally calm your nerves.

8. Exercise

Physical activity—especially rhythmic exercise like walking, swimming, or cycling—boosts vagal tone. It improves heart rate variability, which is a marker of nervous system balance.

9. Massage

Gentle massage, particularly around the neck, shoulders, or abdomen, can stimulate the vagus nerve. Even self-massage or foot reflexology can activate relaxation pathways.

10. Music

Listening to calming or uplifting music influences the vagus nerve through both the auditory system and emotional centers of the brain. Singing along enhances the effect even more.

12. Chiropractic Care

Adjustments that improve spinal alignment can also support vagal activity. Since the vagus nerve passes near the upper cervical spine, chiropractic care may reduce nerve interference and enhance overall nervous system balance.

13. Acupuncture

Traditional acupuncture points, particularly those around the ear and abdomen, have been shown to stimulate the vagus nerve. This can improve digestion, reduce stress, and support emotional well-being.

14. Reiki

This gentle energy-healing practice encourages deep relaxation and balance in the body. By calming the nervous system and restoring energetic harmony, Reiki helps activate the vagus nerve and strengthen the body's natural healing response. To schedule your remote or in-person Reiki session, click [here](#).

15. Bioenergetic Testing

Bioenergetic testing using [the Qest4 system](#) can help identify imbalances in the body that may be interfering with optimal vagus nerve function. By scanning the body's energetic patterns, the Qest4 can highlight stressors, nutritional needs, and areas of blocked energy that impact the nervous system. With this insight, customized support can be created to restore balance, helping the vagus nerve respond more effectively. This personalized approach not only complements other vagus nerve stimulation practices but also promotes overall wellness by addressing the root causes of imbalance. To schedule your remote or in-person Bioenergetic Testing session, click [here](#).

By regularly engaging in any of these simple practices, you can improve vagal tone, reduce stress, and enhance your mind-body balance. Pick the ones that work best for you. A little daily attention to your vagus nerve can go a long way in supporting overall health.

Specific Practices to Stimulate the Vagus Nerve

Dr. Stanley Rosenberg, author of [Accessing the Power of the Vagus Nerve](#), suggests two simple exercises to balance the vagus state. [This video](#) shows you an example of how this is done.

The Basic Exercise by Dr. Stanley Rosenberg

Dr. Stanley Rosenberg developed *The Basic Exercise* as a gentle way to calm the nervous system by stimulating the vagus nerve. It only takes a few minutes and can be done lying down or sitting in a chair.

How to Do It:

1. **Lie on your back** with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. This exercise can also be done sitting in a chair as shown in the video provided.
2. **Clasp your hands** and place them behind your head, so your head is supported.
3. **Without turning your head**, look to the right with just your eyes.
 - Hold the gaze for about 30–60 seconds (until you feel a sigh, swallow, yawn, or a sense of release).
4. Bring your eyes back to the center.
5. Repeat the same movement, but this time **look to the left** with just your eyes.
6. Return your eyes to the center and relax.

Why It Works:

This exercise gently activates the vagus nerve and helps reset the balance between the sympathetic nervous system (fight or flight) and the parasympathetic nervous system (rest and digest). Many people feel calmer, more grounded, and notice tension releasing in their body after just a few minutes.

The Twist and Turn Exercise (Seated Version) by Dr. Stanley Rosenberg

The Twist and Turn exercise, developed by Stanley Rosenberg, is a quick and effective way to release tension in the neck and shoulders, improve posture, and stimulate the vagus nerve for deeper relaxation and easier breathing. It takes less than a minute, making it an excellent reset throughout the day, especially after sitting for long periods. You may view an example of this exercise [here](#).

How to do it:

- 1. Sit comfortably** on a firm chair or surface, keeping your shoulders relaxed.
- 2. Cross your arms in front of your chest**, resting your hands lightly on the opposite shoulders.
- 3. Gently turn your upper body to the left**, allowing your head and shoulders to move together—only as far as is comfortable. Pause briefly, breathe naturally, and notice the stretch.
- 4. Return to center, then turn in the opposite direction to the right.**
- 5. Repeat several times**, keeping the motion relaxed and flowing.

With regular practice, the Twist and Turn exercise can help retrain your body to hold less tension, reduce discomfort, and maintain better overall balance.

Why It Works:

This exercise encourages gentle spinal rotation and cross-body movement, which helps release stiffness and tension. At the same time, it stimulates the vagus nerve, bringing more calm, relaxation, and balance to both body and mind.

How to Use the TENS 7000 for Vagus Nerve Stimulation

Important: Always check with your healthcare provider before starting TENS therapy, especially if you have heart issues, a pacemaker, or other medical conditions.

What You'll Need

- [TENS 7000 device](#)
- [Ear clip electrode](#)
- **Electrode pad (comes with the TENS 7000 unit)**

Placement of Electrodes

1. Attach the **red lead wire** to the **ear clip**. Place the clip on the **outside of the tragus of your right ear** (the small flap in front of the ear canal).
2. Attach the **black lead wire** to a **standard electrode pad**. Place the pad on the **P-6 acupuncture point** on your right wrist — about **three fingers below the base of the palm** in the center of the inner wrist. See the next page for an illustration.

Settings to Begin With

- **Pulse width:** mid-range (about 175)
- **Pulse rate (Hz):** start at **2 Hz**
- **Intensity:** increase until you feel a gentle, comfortable *tapping* sensation — not painful

How to Build Up

It is recommended to do this **twice per day**. Slowly increase your session length and pulse rate over time.

1. **Days 1–2 (or 3):**
 - 2–4 Hz
 - 6–8 minutes
2. **Days 3–5:**
 - 2–4 Hz
 - 10–12 minutes
3. **Days 5–7:**
 - Increase to **14–16 minutes**
 - Keep at 2–4 Hz

4. **Next step (after 2–3 more days):**

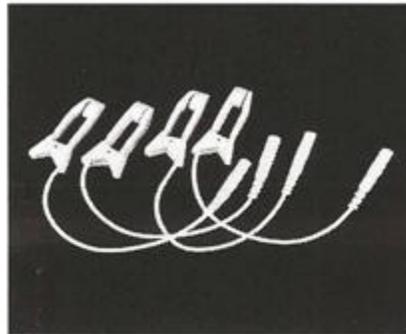
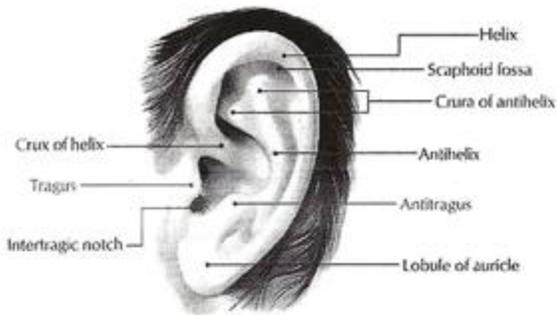
- Increase pulse rate to **10–12 Hz**
- Time: 14–16 minutes

5. **Continue increasing every 2–3 days until you reach:**

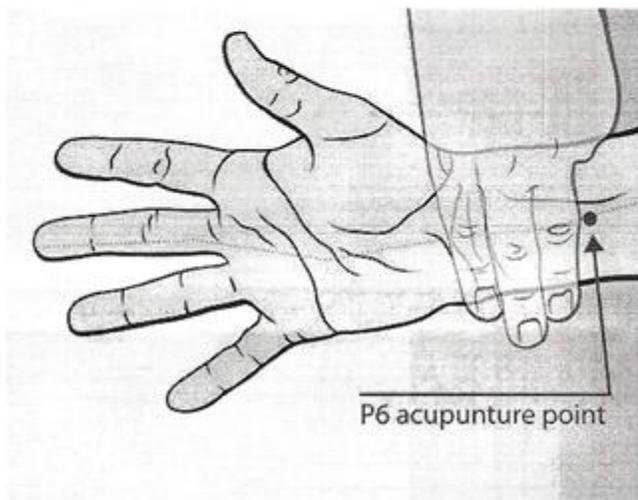
- **20 Hz**
- **20 minutes per session**

⚠ **Do not go above 20 Hz** — higher settings may activate the *sympathetic nervous system* (the stress response) instead of calming the vagus nerve.

✅ Done consistently, this protocol helps gently stimulate the vagus nerve to support relaxation, stress reduction, and improved nervous system. stem balance.



Black lead goes to acupuncture point P-6 on right wrist



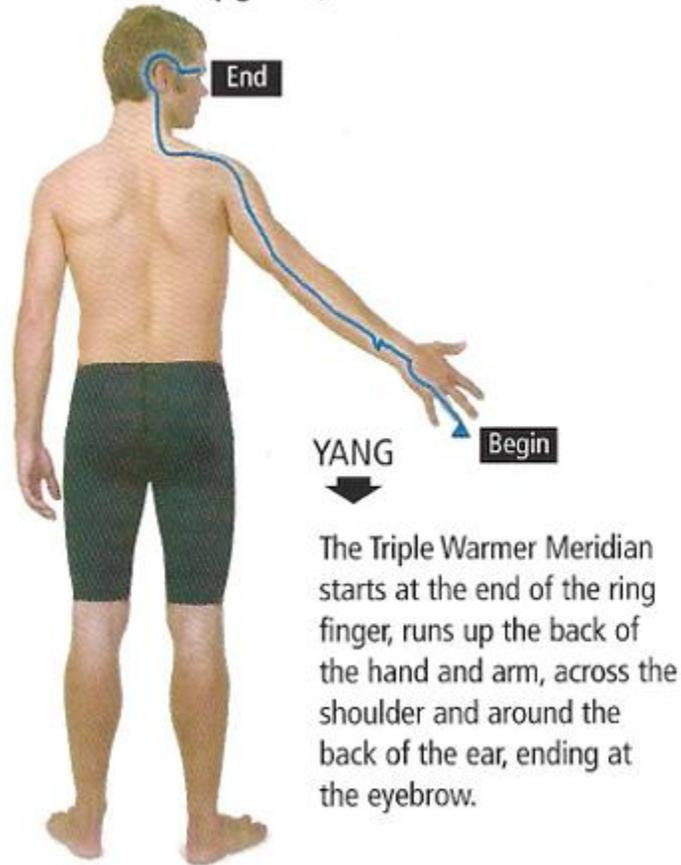
Triple Warmer Meridian Sedating Meditation

For Stimulating the Vagus Nerve

This meditation helps reset and stimulate the vagus nerve by focusing on the Triple Warmer Meridian. It is an exercise from Donna Eden's book, *Energy Medicine*, as interpreted by Christie Vallance on [Insight Timer](#), a free meditation app.

1. Start with your palms facing down on your thighs.
2. Take a breath and as you exhale press your belly to spine to fully expel the air in your lungs and belly.
3. Take a deep breath and as you exhale make the sound of "haaaaaa". Do this one more time.
4. For the next three breaths, continuing exhaling with the "haaaaaa" sound and press your palms on your thighs while exhaling and pushing down towards your knees.
5. Breathe naturally for a moment.
6. With your right hand, trace upward the center of your body, starting at the stomach, over the heart and then the throat. Then, place your right hand on the left side of your face with your index (pointer) finger on the left temple, which is the end of the Triple Warmer Meridian. From here, we will now trace it backwards to receive the sedating effect of this exercise after a breathing exercise.
7. Take three (3) "haaaaaa" breaths.
8. Bend the fingers and place the pads of the fingers on the left temple. Before starting, take a look at the Triple Warmer image on the next page to see its path. From the temple, trace the finger pads over the back of the ear, down the neck, on the back of the shoulder, down the back of the arm to the elbow, to the front of the forearm and over and past the ring finger.
9. Return your hand to the left side of the face and take just one deep regular breath. Trace the triple warmer again. And then repeat this process one more time.
10. Replace the right hand on your right thigh.
11. Repeat steps 5-9, but with the left hand on the right side of the body.
12. Replace the left hand on your right thigh.
13. Take a deep inhale and as you exhale, press your hands on your thighs towards your knees like you did earlier to ground this practice. Then, do this two more times.
14. Relax your hands on the thighs.
15. Observe your body and internal world. Do you feel calmer than before you started the practice? More present? More grounded? Do you feel more spacious and open? Do you sense more saliva in your mouth? If you answer yes, your vagus nerve has let your nervous system know that it can go into rest and digest.
16. If this meditation was helpful, it is recommended to do this practice twice per day to retrain old habit patterns. This is especially helpful for people who have been in prolonged periods of stress. **This meditation is most effective when done between 9-11 pm, when the triple warmer meridian is at its peak.**
17. Finally, bring your hands to your heart, tune inward and send a sense of loving kindness to your body and all of its strengths and challenges.
18. Namaste.

TRIPLE WARMER MERIDIAN (pg 179)



Sources for this paper include: the Mayo Clinic, Cedars, Sinai, Cleveland Clinic, International Center for Reiki Training, and Dr. Cindy Jakubiec websites.

Choose which methods for stimulating the vagus nerve work best for you. There is no need to do all of them.

If you have any questions or would like to support in stimulating your vagus nerve and finding more peace and calm in your life, feel free to set up a free consultation [here](#) with mind body spirit coach, [Denise Maple](#), to see how she can guide you toward your goals. If you would like Denise's guidance on offering stress reducing programs for your company through Live Life Business Consulting, schedule a discovery call [here](#).

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