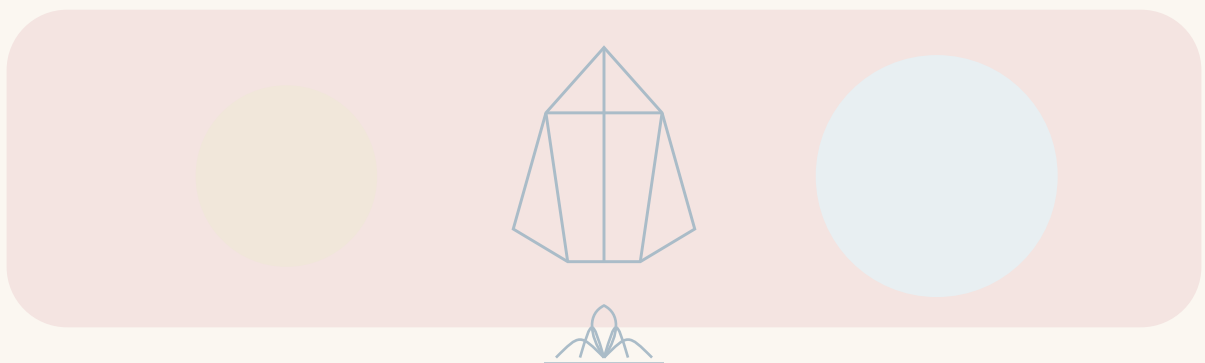


THE ZEN MOVEMENT™

free educational guide

Understanding Your Nervous System

A simple introduction to stress, activation, regulation, and body awareness.



Wellness education for everyday life

Understanding Your Nervous System

Your nervous system is constantly gathering information, coordinating your body, and helping you respond to what is happening around you. Understanding a few basics can make your reactions feel less mysterious and give you more choices for responding.

The goal is not to be calm all the time

A healthy nervous system changes states throughout the day. Activation helps us act, focus, move, and respond. Rest states help us recover. The aim is flexibility - being able to notice what is happening and support the body in shifting when needed.

The nervous system in simple terms

- Central nervous system: the brain and spinal cord.
- Peripheral nervous system: the network of nerves connecting the brain and spinal cord with the rest of the body.
- Autonomic nervous system: helps regulate automatic functions such as heart rate, digestion, sweating, and breathing patterns.

Activation and restoration

The autonomic nervous system includes pathways that support mobilization and pathways that support rest and recovery. You may notice activation as a faster heartbeat, muscle tension, shallow breathing, restlessness, or a strong urge to act. You may notice restoration as slower breathing, softer muscles, digestion returning, sleepiness, or a greater sense of ease.

Stress responses are protective responses

When the brain detects challenge or threat, the body can shift quickly. Common patterns include fighting, fleeing, freezing, becoming very still, or feeling disconnected. These responses are not personal failures - they are part of the body's protective repertoire.

Your 'window' for coping

People often use the phrase window of tolerance to describe a range in which we can stay present enough to think, feel, connect, and make choices. Outside that range, we may feel highly activated or very shut down. The size of this workable range can change with sleep, illness, stress, relationships, environment, and past experiences.

High activation	Workable range	Low activation
Racing thoughts Tension Irritability Panic Restlessness	Present Connected Flexible attention Able to choose Able to recover	Numbness Fog Withdrawal Very low energy Disconnection

Learn your own signals

- What happens to your breathing when you are stressed?
- Where do you first notice tension?
- Do you speed up, shut down, overthink, become irritable, or get very quiet?
- What environments help you feel more settled?
- What forms of movement, sound, touch, connection, or rest feel supportive?

Small ways to support regulation

- Orient: slowly look around and notice where you are.
- Breathe: use a comfortable, slower breathing rhythm.
- Move: walk, stretch, sway, shake, or change posture.
- Use sensory input: temperature, texture, music, humming, or a weighted object if comfortable.
- Connect: speak with a safe person or spend time near supportive others.
- Recover: food, hydration, sleep, rest, and reducing stimulation matter.

A useful question

Instead of asking, 'How do I make this feeling go away?' try asking, 'What state am I in, and what might help me move 5% toward more steadiness?' Small shifts count.

Notice first. Then choose your next small support.



Your Nervous System Check-In

Use this page as a quick pause. You do not need to analyze your answers - simply notice what is here today.

1. Right now, my energy feels...

2. The strongest sensation I notice in my body is...

3. My breathing feels...

4. Something in my environment that feels supportive is...

5. One small thing that could help me feel 5% steadier is...

6. What I want to remember from this check-in...

Educational note: This guide is general wellness education, not diagnosis or treatment. Intense, persistent, or worsening symptoms - especially fainting, chest pain, severe breathing difficulty, new neurological symptoms, or thoughts of self-harm - require appropriate professional or emergency care.