

MINDFUL MOMENTS

Vagus Nerve Stimulation Practices

Vagus nerve stimulation is utilized in helping decrease the body's activated response to stress by regulating blood pressure, heart rate, and digestion.

There are nearly 45 miles of nerves running through your body. This is an information highway within us that delivers messages to our entire body, internally and externally. Sometimes there may be a “traffic jam” building up of tension or there may be too many “signals” speeding to one location at the same time. These practices of gentle massage help to send signals to the vagus nerve that then aid in promoting rest for your nervous system. Think of the following exercises as a workout for your nervous system to increase your “vagal tone”.

DIRECTIONS

**Please note that before engaging in any mindfulness exercises that require you to close your eyes or use of your hands, it is advised that you are not actively engaging in any activity such as operating heavy machinery, etc. These Mindful Moments exercises are best utilized by taking a moment to excuse yourself to a private or semi-private break room or area that is well lit and ventilated.*

THE FOLLOWING EXERCISES ARE TO BE DONE WITH A LIGHT TOUCH/RUB. DO NOT PRESS DOWN TOO FIRMLY WHILE COMPLETING THE FOLLOWING EXERCISES.

- **Step 1:** Sit or stand comfortably in a relaxed, yet dignified position, Activating and lengthening your spine while engaging your core. Check in with your body and notice any areas of tension.
- **Step 2:** Bring your awareness to your breath. Mindful breathing is often referred to as “belly breathing” or “diaphragmatic breathing”. This is done by expanding your belly on your inhales and sucking your belly button in towards your spine on your exhales while elongating your exhales to be just slightly longer than your inhales. Keep in mind this is not labored or pressured breathing.
- **Step 3: Technique One:** With two fingers, rub up the sides of your neck. Starting at the base of your neck and gently continuing up and behind your ears stopping at your hairline. Then gently pressing on your skin pull your fingers down and pause there for a deep inhale/exhale. Repeat as needed.
- **Step 4: Technique Two:** Just at your hairline and behind your ears, begin to press your two fingers back towards the back of your neck, when they reach your hairline bring them back to meet the back of your ears. Repeat as needed.
- **Step 5: Technique Three:** Take your index finger and your thumb and press them together. Making this same motion, place your index finger along the inside of the curve of your ear and your thumb at the back of your ear. Following the curvature of your cartilage, gently pull your ear back and down as you run your fingers down towards your ear lobe. Complete this on the opposite ear as well. Repeat as needed.
- Please note that these exercises can be done together or separately.