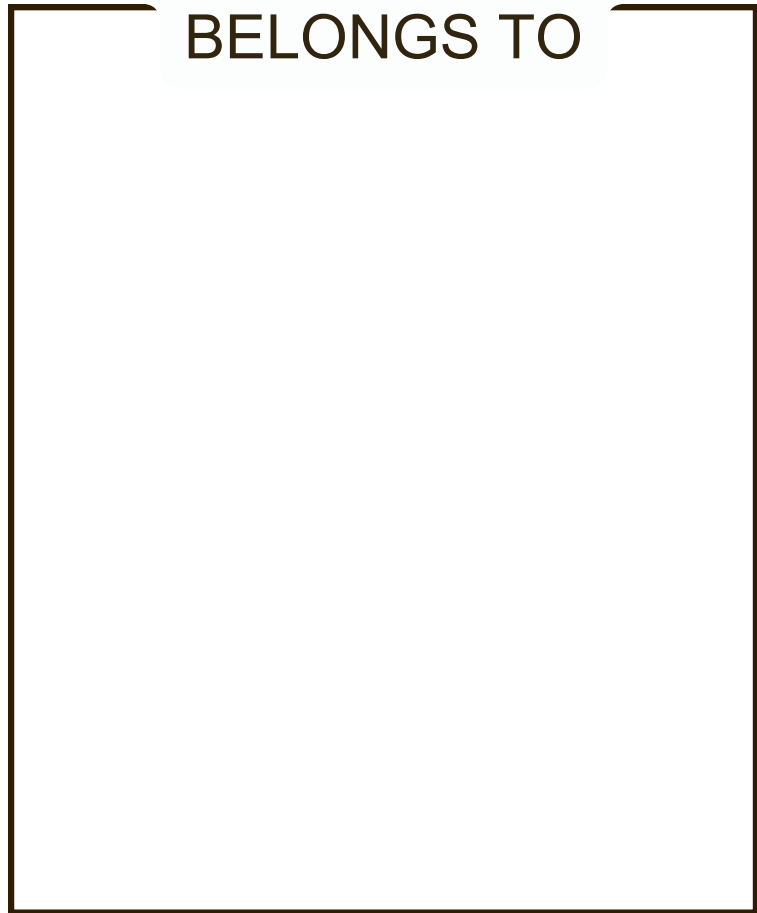


Vagal Toning Planner



EPIPHANY
FINANCIAL THERAPY™

THIS PLANNER
BELONGS TO



About the Vagal Nerve

Most people aren't aware of how critical the vagus nerve is to our wellbeing. It's one of the 12 cranial nerves that carry messages directly from the brain to the body, mostly to the neck and head. But the vagus nerve, named for the Latin word for 'wandering', is the longest of the 12, wandering through the neck, throat, chest and intestines before ending in the colon.

It's estimated that this nerve alone is about 80% of our parasympathetic nervous system and has been described as the prime driving force of our nervous system. Its health eventually dictates the health of our immune system, brain, and overall inflammatory state.

Its functions include:

- Digestion
- Breathing
- Mood
- Immune system response
- Speech
- Taste
- Mucus and saliva production
- Urine output
- Relaxation
- Calmness
- Helping prevent inflammation
- Helping make memories

Damage to the vagus nerve can cause a host of symptoms:

- Difficulty speaking - losing your voice or becoming hoarse or wheezy
- Trouble drinking liquids
- Unusual heart rate
- Abnormal blood pressure
- Digestive issues like reflux, nausea, vomiting, bloating or pain
- General higher inflammation
- Fluctuations in blood sugar
- Unexplained weight loss
- Emotional and mental health impacts such as depression, anxiety and PTSD.

Because it manages or influences so many critical processes in the body, it's become the focus of significant research in recent years. More information about this critical system is being discovered every day.

What we already know is that improving vagal tone brings the heart, breathing and blood pressure to a more regular state, which improves our emotional state.

There are many things you can do in your daily life to improve your vagal tone and balance your physical, emotional and mental responses to life.

10 Things to Tone Your Vagal Nerve



Slow breathing activates the vagus nerve. You can do this anywhere. Any slow breathing is good. Work up to 15-20 minutes per session. Box breathing is a helpful way to develop the practice.

Cold water slows the heart rate and lowers blood pressure while increasing blood flow to the brain. So it makes you feel calm and more focussed. Get the same effect by splashing cold water onto your face from chin to forehead.



Gargle with cold water for 30 seconds or more. Then spit out the water and smile or laugh. This stimulates the vagus nerves in the face and at the back of the throat. Combine with a cold shower.

Singing slows down your heart rate and helps you relax. It also stimulates the vagus nerve in the back of your throat. Sing in the cold shower for double impact. Sing without judging and do it loudly!



Exercise improves circulation, flexibility and tone, regulates breathing and calms the heart. This includes yoga and tai chi. There are many workout routines online. Look for one that suits your current ability.

Meditation can seem difficult, especially when you're feeling anxious, depressed, or otherwise emotionally heightened. The Loving Kindness meditation is a simple practice that you can do any time because you are actively thinking.



Massage: Any head, neck and shoulder massage is great for vagal toning, as is reflexology. Or you can self-massage areas that are close to the nerve using any massage oil that you prefer.

Social connection: Yes, hanging out with friends improves your vagal tone! Plan to do it regularly.



Probiotics: The bacteria in our gut contributes to our overall physical and mental health. Many things affect the level of bacteria in our bodies. A good probiotic supplement can help to support the vagus nerve.

Laughing lowers blood pressure, releases beneficial chemicals and mops up stress hormones. You can follow laughter yoga on YouTube. Start with 5 minutes a day. Combine with any other activity on this list.



10 Things to Tone Your Vagal Nerve

Which of the 10 toners do you think you could add to your daily routine? For example, for personal connection who would you want to start seeing, or for adding singing you could create a playlist and schedule a time to listen to it.

Action	How can I do this	When can I start this
Slow breathing		
Cold water		
Gargling		
Singing		
Exercise		
Meditation		
Massage		
Social Connection		
Probiotics		
Laughing		

5 Things That Overstimulate Your Vagal Nerve



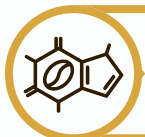
Stress: Physical or psychological stress causes the vagus nerve to over stimulated. This includes pain and fear.

Botox: Botox interrupts the production of acetylcholine which can affect breathing.



Sugar: There is much research into the negative effects of sugar on the human body and it's really hard to cut it. Reduce a little each day - one less piece of chocolate, half a spoon less in coffee until you're using a minimal amount.

Trans fats: Found in processed foods, fast and fried foods, it has many negative effects, including decreasing vagal tone.



Caffeine and alcohol: Using either excessive can inflame the vagus nerve, as can anything that otherwise upsets your digestion.

Overstimulator	How can I do this	When can I stop this
Stress		
Botox		
Sugar		
Trans fats		
Caffeine and alcohol		

Set Smart Goals

Looking back at the previous pages, pick three activities to tone your vagal nerve. Some may be complementary. For example, slow breathing can help ease stress, as can singing and massage. So you are starting new habits and also improving on the overstimulators.

Make these three goals SMART:

SPECIFIC	MEASURABLE	ACHIEVABLE	REALISTIC	TIMELY
<i>Reduce stress is general. Reduce stress by meditating for 5 minutes a day is specific</i>	<i>Meditate for 5 minutes a day 3 days a week can be measured</i>	<i>Running for 30 minutes a day might not be achievable if you have a knee injury</i>	<i>Meditate for an hour a day might not be realistic for someone who has never meditated before</i>	<i>Set a timeframe for the goal to be achieved.</i>

These are my top 3 vagal toning activities in the next month

Activity 1

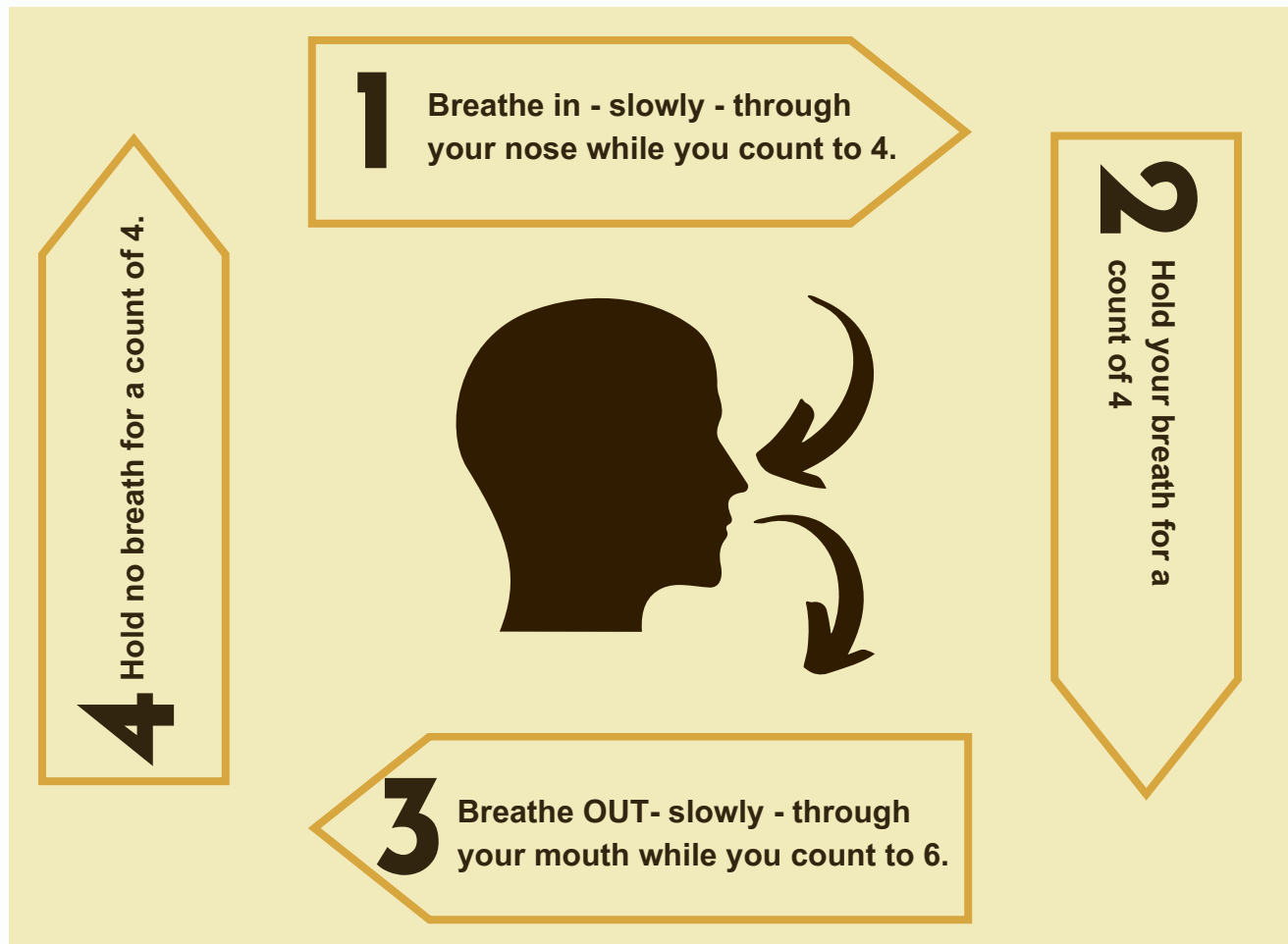
Activity 2

Activity 3

Box Breathing

How to do it

Sit in a comfortable position, or lie down. While you're learning, place your hand on your stomach so you are more aware of your breath moving in and out of your body.



When you first start the practice, you will probably feel like you're gasping for breath. Change the count to 3, if you need to, until you get more practiced.

When you feel more practiced, increase the count for each side of the box - go to 5, 6, 7.

TIPS!

Practice for up to 5 minutes at a time.

If you feel light headed, hold your breath for a little longer to increase the carbon dioxide in your blood.

Work up to 20 minutes a day.

Loving Kindness Meditation



Body position



Sit or lay down. It's most important that your body feels supported. Close your eyes. Notice your breath. Inhale slowly, making sure to push your belly outwards. Exhale slowly, noticing your belly fall. Repeat for a few cycles.

Receive loving kindness



Bring to mind someone who you believe has your best interests at heart. It might be a family member, colleague, or someone from your past. It may be a pet. Imagine they are right in front of you, smiling at you. Imagine they are beaming at you the love and friendship they feel for you. Breathe in this feeling for a few breaths. Really take it in. Allow the feeling to fill your heart, overflow into your chest. Let those feelings expand even more while you repeat the mantra: *May I be safe, may I be healthy, may I be happy, may I live with ease.*

Extend this loving feel to others



Bring to mind someone who could really use some of this joy. Imagine them seated in front of you. Without much thought or any judgment about them or what they're experiencing, let the feeling of loving kindness in you extend to them. You can use an image if you like, such as a sun radiating from you to them. Repeat the mantra: *May you be safe, may you be healthy, may you be happy, may you live with ease.* Release their image and focus again on the feeling of loving kindness in you.

Now bring to mind someone that you don't particularly like or find difficult - not the most difficult person in your life, more someone who you find somewhat annoying. Try to let go of the annoying difficult feelings they bring up. Instead tune into the feeling of loving kindness and let it flow to the annoying person while saying: *May you be safe, may you be healthy, may you be happy, may you live with ease.*

See yourself as part of a circle with your loving friend, the person who needs some support, and the person who annoys you. Allow the loving kindness to flow like waves to all, and beyond, while you repeat: *May all beings be safe, may all beings be healthy, may all beings be happy, may all beings live with ease.*

Bring the practice to a close by inhaling slowly, exhaling slowly, three times.



Social Connection Plan

Social connection is a great way to tone your vagus nerve. When our lives are so busy it's very easy for friendships to slip away, and new friendships to stop. This plan can help you focus on this important aspect of your life.

I want to keep spending time with these people

I want to keep doing these things with my friends

I would like to get to know these people

I'd like to explore doing these things with others

I'd like to try these things on my own

Resources

Many books, articles, podcasts and workshops can help you deepen your understanding of this important topic.

Resource	How will this support me?

Daily Planner

Date _____

Goals for today

--

Vagal Toning Activity

--

Personal tasks

--

Work tasks

--

Meals today

--	--	--	--

Appointments

--

Water



Other drinks



Mood Today

Affirmation:

--

Energy Levels

Vagal Tone Weekly Planner

Morning

Day Time

Night Time

Monday

--

--

--

Tuesday

--

--

--

Wednesday

--

--

--

Thursday

--

--

--

Friday

--

--

--

Saturday

--

--

--

Sunday

--

--

--

Notes

