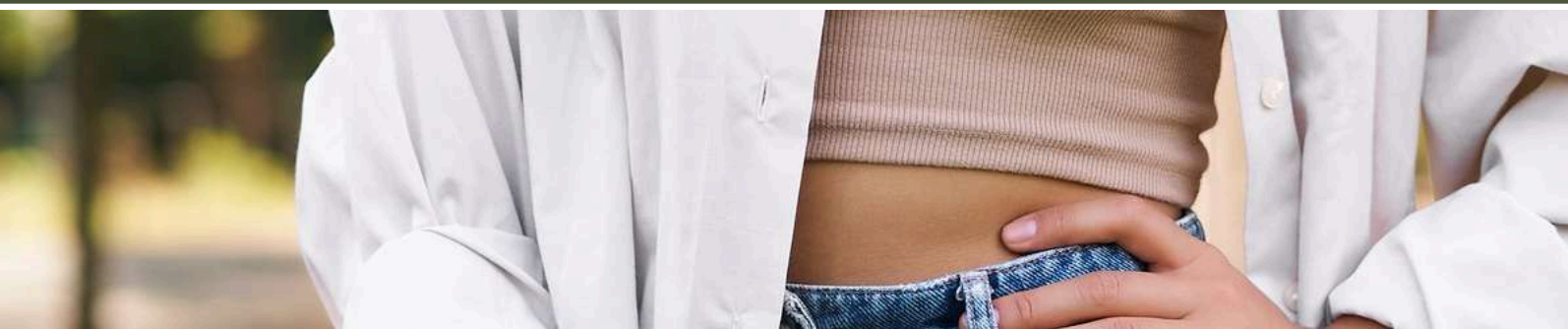


7 NERVOUS SYSTEM MICRO-RESETS FOR YOUR WORKDAY



Quick, science-backed practices you can use between meetings to regulate without going into a downhill spiral.

Michelle Mah, Psychotherapist & Coach



Hi, I'm Michelle!

I spent years overachieving my way through burnout, thinking calm was something I had to earn. On the outside, I looked successful. But inside, my nervous system was in survival mode as I struggled through my eating disorder.

Perhaps like me, you're the one people count on. You lead, you feel deeply, and you carry a lot - maybe too much. On the outside, you look successful. On the inside, your nervous system is in survival mode.

This work is personal because I've lived it, and I know what it takes to come home to yourself. You're not broken. You're just done with hustling, chasing and ready for something deeper.



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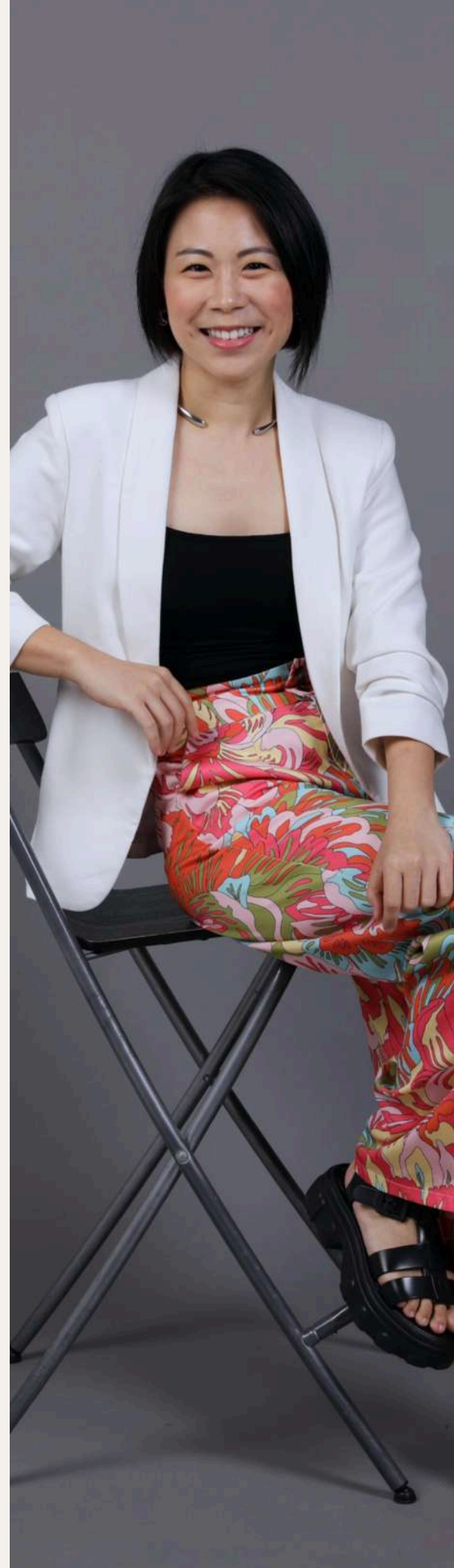
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INTRODUCTION

You're here because you lead, you feel deeply, and you carry a lot. Maybe too much.

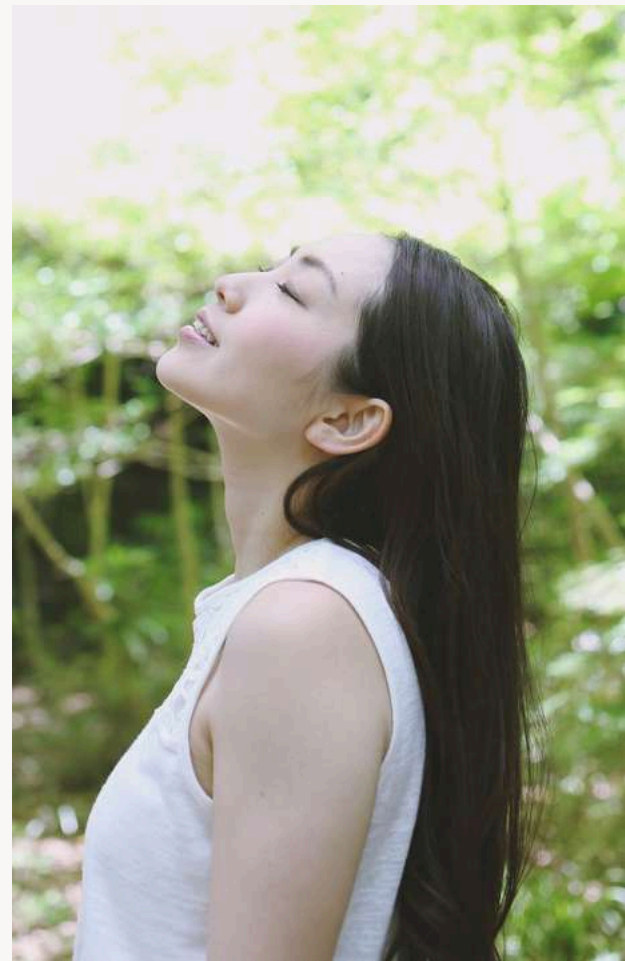
This reset is for the part of you that's tired of holding it all together.
It's for the version of you who knows there's another way to live and lead.

What you'll find here is grounded in:

- The neuroscience of stress and resilience
- Polyvagal theory and trauma-informed care
- Somatic awareness
- Mindfulness-based practices
- Self-compassionate practices

This isn't about fixing you. It's about helping you come home to yourself. To regulate your body, rewire your mind, and reclaim your clarity. So you can lead with presence, not pressure.





How This Works

Each day you'll get:

- A bit of insight about your nervous system
- A mindfulness or somatic practice
- A set of journal prompts
- Reflections to help you integrate what you're learning

You can move through this in 7 days or stretch it across a few weeks.

Give yourself the pace your body needs.



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DAY 1:

Micro-Reset #1: Grounding When Your Thoughts Are Racing



Theme: Why You're Not "Crazy", You're Overloaded

Theory: Survival Mode and the Hijacked Brain

When you're under constant pressure, your body shifts into **survival mode**.

That's not a mindset issue. It's a nervous system in **overdrive**.

Your amygdala kicks in. Cortisol floods your system. Your heart races.

And the part of your brain that helps you plan, reflect, and empathize goes offline. When your brain detects a threat (real or perceived), it activates the amygdala.

This sets off a sympathetic response: cortisol, adrenaline, and a cascade of physiological changes.

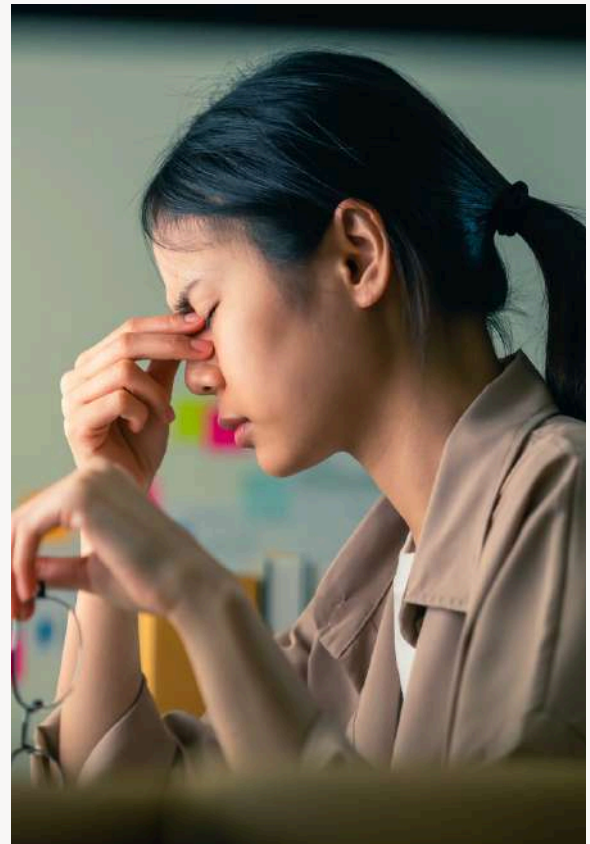
Meanwhile, the prefrontal cortex (responsible for planning, empathy, and long-term decision-making) gets shut down. This is not a failure of willpower. This is biology.

You may notice:

- Racing thoughts, hypervigilance
- Impulse to control or overwork
- Brain fog or emotional numbness
- Difficulty sleeping, digesting, or relaxing

This is your body protecting you. It just doesn't realize the threat is over.

This activates the **ventral vagal pathway, calming your nervous system**.



PRACTICE: 5-5-5 GROUNDING

1. Name 5 things you can see
2. Name 5 things you can hear
3. Move 5 parts of your body slowly

JOURNAL REFLECTION:

- How does stress show up in my body?
- What symptoms have I been normalizing?
- What would it look like to treat my nervous system with care instead of criticism?
- Rather than operating from "the level of the head", what would it look like to shift to the level of the "heart and gut"?



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DAY 2:

Micro-Reset #2: Checking Your Nervous System State

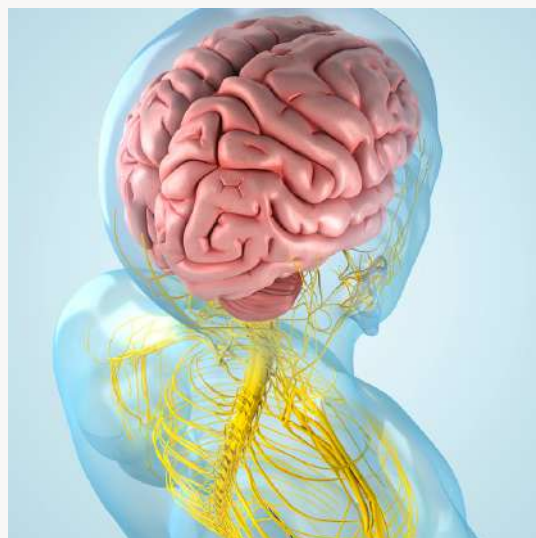


Theme: Mapping Your Inner States

Theory: The 3 States of the Nervous System

According to **Polyvagal Theory (Dr. Stephen Porges)**, your autonomic nervous system cycles through 3 main states:

1. **Ventral Vagal:** calm, connected, creative
2. **Sympathetic:** Fight or flight (anxious, overwhelmed)
3. **Dorsal Vagal:** Freeze/shutdown (numb, exhausted)



These states are fluid. You move in and out of them throughout the day. You might not be aware of it yet, but your body is always responding to cues of safety or danger.

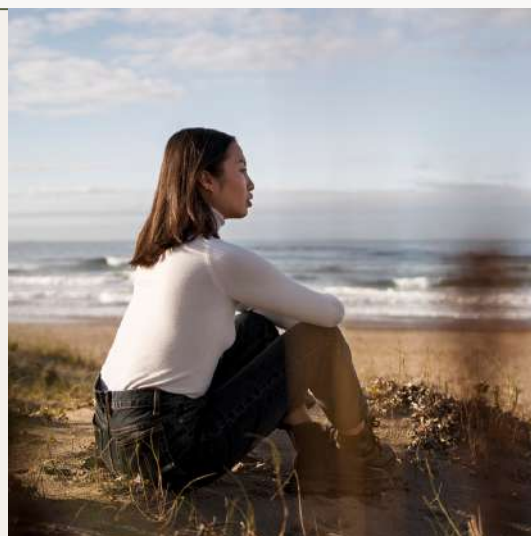
Most high-achieving women oscillate between sympathetic overdrive and dorsal collapse, **rarely accessing ventral safety.**

Understanding this map helps you respond, not react.

Practice: Nervous System Self Mapping

Use this check-in 3x today:

- What state am I in?
- What activated it?
- What helps me return to safety?



USE THE 3-STATE MODEL TO NAME THAT EXPERIENCE INSTEAD OF PATHOLOGIZING IT

JOURNAL REFLECTION:



Pause and take some time to yourself when you notice
yourself slipping into overthinking or over-functioning

- What nervous system state feels most familiar to me?
- How did I learn to survive in that state?
- What might it feel like to be safe, without needing to perform or protect?



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DAY 3:

Micro-Reset #3: Scanning Your Body for Signals



Theme: Your Body Keeps the Score, but It Also Holds the Solution

Theory: The 3 States of the Nervous System

You've been taught to override your body in the name of productivity

To push through. To ignore fatigue. To suppress the signals that say “pause.”

Interoception is your ability to sense internal bodily cues (hunger, fatigue, tension, intuition). High-functioning women often override these signals to maintain productivity

Over time, this leads to:

- Disconnection from your own body
- Chronic tension or pain
- Emotional numbing

Your body is not inconvenient. It is the access point to healing.

When you feel anxious, tense, or shut down, your body isn't betraying you or disrupting your life. Instead, it is communicating.



PRACTICE: 5-MINUTE SOMATIC SCAN

1. Partially or fully close your eyes.
2. Gently scan your body from head to toe.
3. Notice without fixing.
4. Whisper inwardly: "I'm listening."

Let your body lead for once

JOURNAL REFLECTION:



Pause and take some time to yourself when you notice yourself slipping into overthinking or over-functioning

- Where in my body do I feel most alive? Most absent?
- What does my body need more of? Less of?
- What would it mean to work with my body, not against it



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DAY 4:

Micro-Reset #4: Testing Your Embodied Boundaries



Theme: Why Boundaries Matter

- You are rewiring neural pathways: Building connections in the prefrontal cortex, insula, and ventral vagal system.
- You are increasing interoceptive awareness (the ability to feel your internal world), which is essential for intuition, decision-making, and empathy.
- You are shifting your identity: From "performer" to "presence," from "fixer" to "feeler."

This is embodied leadership. a nervous system that can handle complexity without collapse, and a heart that leads with care, not control.

Integration Prompts

- What's shifted in me this week?
- What tools felt most supportive?
- What kind of leader do I want to be from here forward?



Theory: Fawning, People-Pleasing & Embodied Consent

Many high-achieving women unconsciously use the fawn response to avoid conflict or rejection. This shows up as:

- Overcommitting
- Saying yes when you mean no
- Performing competence while feeling depleted

But every “yes” that’s not fully embodied is a withdrawal from your self-trust bank.

Boundaries are not just psychological, they’re often somatic.

PRACTICE: THE EMBODIED "YES/NO" TEST

1. Think of a recent request.
2. Imagine saying "yes." Observe your body.
3. Now imagine saying "no." What shifts in the body?

Somatic cues of truth: expansion, breath ease, warmth Cues
of self-abandonment: tightness, shallow breath, collapse

JOURNAL REFLECTION:



Pause and take some time to yourself when you notice
yourself slipping into overthinking or over-functioning

- Where in my life am I saying "yes" from fear?
- What does a full-bodied "yes" feel like?
- What boundary do I need to set to protect my nervous system?



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DAY 5:

Micro-Reset #5: Regulating Your System with Restorative Rest



Theme: Rest Is Not a Reward. It's a Requirement

Theory: The Default Mode Network & Creative Recovery



The Default Mode Network (DMN) is a network of brain regions that activates when you're resting, daydreaming, or reflecting. It's where insights, memory consolidation, and emotional processing happen.

When you don't rest:

The DMN can't function properly.

You become reactive instead of responsive. You lose creativity and empathy.

Rest isn't lazy. It's leadership.

Rest is a neural reset, not a luxury.

PRACTICE: 10-MINUTE RESTORATIVE RITUAL

Lie down with eyes closed

Place hands on belly and heart

Breathe: Inhale 4, Exhale 6

Whisper: “I don’t have to earn this moment.”

JOURNAL REFLECTION:



Pause and take some time to yourself when you notice yourself slipping into overthinking or over-functioning

- What comes up for me when I rest?
- What have I been taught about productivity and worth?
- Who do I become when I’m fully rested?



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DAY 6:

Micro-Reset #6: Soothing the Inner Critic with Self-Compassion



Theme: Replacing Shame with Gentle Power

“You can’t shame yourself into transformation. But you can gently heal by starting with love.” Self-criticism activates your threat system. Self-compassion activates your caregiving system.

This shift changes your chemistry, your mood, and your leadership.

Theory: The Neuroscience of Self Criticism vs. Self-Compassion

The inner critic is often internalized **early** in life, sometimes from high expectations, trauma, or cultural conditioning. It’s part of your threat defense system, primarily governed by the amygdala.

When activated, it floods your system with cortisol, increases heart rate, and shuts down prefrontal cortex functioning (your capacity to **reflect, regulate, and lead**).



On the flip side, self-compassion activates the mammalian caregiving system, releasing oxytocin and endorphins.

These chemicals:

- Soothe your nervous system
- Create a feeling of safety and connection
- Restore access to higher-order thinking

In short: self-compassion is a tool for nervous system regulation and executive function recovery.

PRACTICE: MINDFUL SELF-COMPASSION (ADAPTED FROM DR. KRISTIN NEFF)

When you notice stress, self-judgment, or shame:

1. **Acknowledge the pain:** Say silently, “This is a moment of suffering.”
2. **Recognize common humanity:** “I’m not alone. Other women feel this too.”
3. **Offer kindness:** “May I give myself the compassion I need.”

Optional: Place your hand on your heart, cheek, or belly to signal safety to your body.

The body hears **tone** more than words. Speak to yourself like someone you love. Let your inner voice be warm, slow, and soft.

JOURNAL REFLECTION:



Pause and take some time to yourself when you notice yourself slipping into overthinking or over-functioning

- When and how did I first learn to be hard on myself?
- What is my inner critic trying to protect me from?
- How would I speak to a beloved friend in the same situation?
- What would change if I believed that softness is strength?

BONUS TIP:

Try using mindful self-talk throughout the day. For example:

- “This is hard, and I’m doing my best.”
- “I can slow down. Nothing is on fire.”
- “I am worthy of kindness, even when I’m not perfect.”

In my work with women, I’ve found that what they most need isn’t more strategy, it’s more softness. Self-compassion is not weakness. It is the nervous system’s pathway back to power.



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DAY 7:

Micro-Reset #7: Leading From the Inside Out



Theme: Leading From The Inside Out



“Embodied leadership is not about controlling your world. It’s about being in the right relationship with yourself.”

Theory: Neuroplasticity, Identity, and Inner Leadership

By now, you’ve practiced tools that regulate your nervous system, reframe your inner narratives, and reconnect you with your body. What’s happening beneath the surface is even more profound.

You were built for presence. For depth. For sustainable power.

Pause and take some time to yourself when you notice yourself slipping into overthinking or over-functioning

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- This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Closing Note From Me to You

You've made it to the end! And maybe, in some ways, back to yourself. This reset wasn't about doing more. It was about noticing, feeling, and remembering what your body has known all along: **that you were never meant to live in a constant state of survival.**

You've just spent the last 7 days learning how to listen to yourself deeply, and to access a version of you that doesn't rely on over-functioning to feel worthy. Embodied leadership makes nervous system literacy possible.

If you take nothing else from this experience, let it be this:

You are not broken. Your body is communicating. The more you listen, the more choices you'll have.

As a psychotherapist, coach, consultant, and most relationally someone who's walked this path alongside many high-achieving individuals, I can tell you this with absolute certainty:

The most powerful person in the room is not the one who does the most. It's the one who knows when to pause, when to soften, and when to lead from within.

There's more available to you - not through pushing, but through presence. Let this be the beginning.

*With belief in your becoming,
Michelle Mah*

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**IF YOU WANT SUPPORT
APPLYING THIS IN YOUR
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OR TEAM, YOU CAN:**

**Book a 1:1 therapy or
coaching session**

**Invite me to facilitate a
workshop for your organization**