

Gentle Self-Regulation

A Guide for Overwhelmed
Nervous Systems

Karen Gay

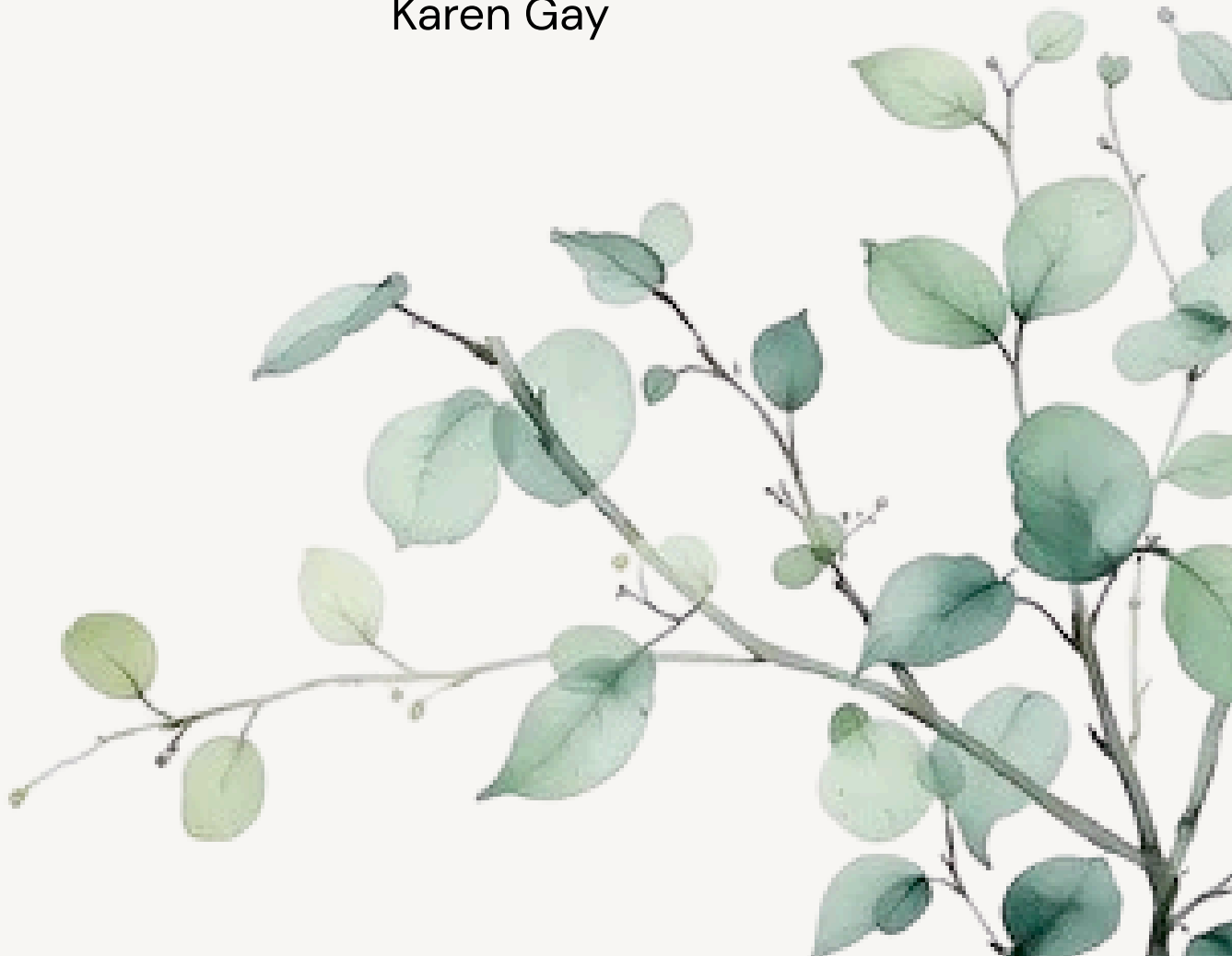


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INTRODUCTION

A gentle orientation to the guide's purpose and how it can support your nervous system through calm, choice, and awareness.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Guidance on when, how, and why to use these practices, with emphasis on safety and flexibility

THE PRACTICES

Ten body-based, self-regulation exercises designed to meet your nervous system where it is, without force or pressure.

ONE-PAGE REFERENCE GUIDE

A condensed overview of the ten practices, easy to print, post, or carry with you for support in real-time.

APPENDICES

Additional tools and reflections to deepen your practice, including a daily tracker, common signs of regulation, FAQs, and resources.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT & RESOURCES

Options for continued care, supportive tools, and resources to explore at your own pace.

Gentle Nervous System Self-Regulation

INTRODUCTION

This book is a gentle companion for moments when your nervous system feels overwhelmed, unsettled, or in need of support.

The practices inside are informed by trauma-aware, body-based principles that respect the intelligence of your nervous system. Nothing here is about fixing yourself, pushing through discomfort, or revisiting the past. There is no goal to achieve and no outcome to force.

Each exercise invites awareness rather than effort. You remain in control of pace, depth, and duration at all times.

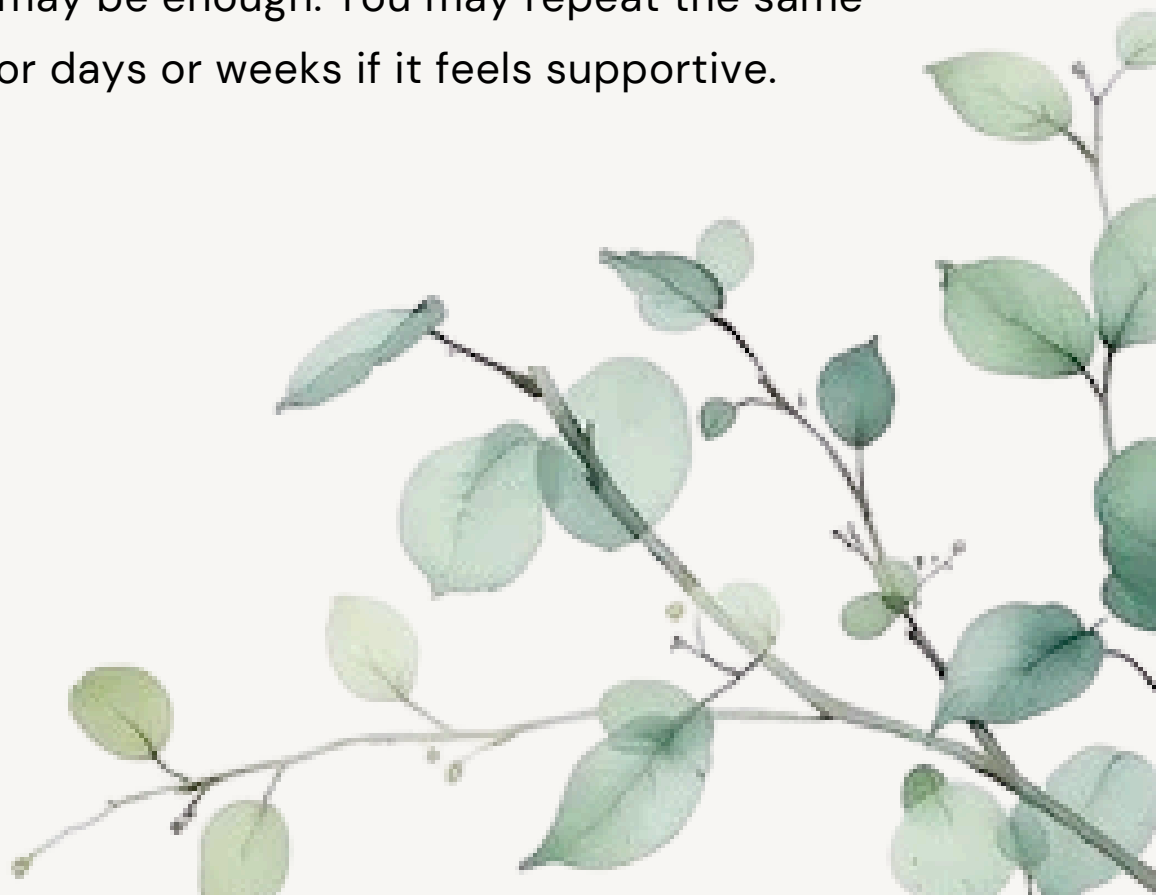
This practice should always feel optional. If anything feels like too much, return to noticing the room around you.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

You may use this book in several ways:

- As a short daily grounding practice
- As support during moments of stress or emotional intensity
- As a gentle reset between activities
- As a companion to therapeutic or body-based sessions

You do not need to complete the exercises in order. One step may be enough. You may repeat the same exercise for days or weeks if it feels supportive.



Important Safety Notes

- This process should always feel optional at every step.
- If intensity rises, return immediately to orientation or external resourcing.
- This is regulation support, not trauma processing. Less imagery is often safer than more.

When to Stop and Re-Orient

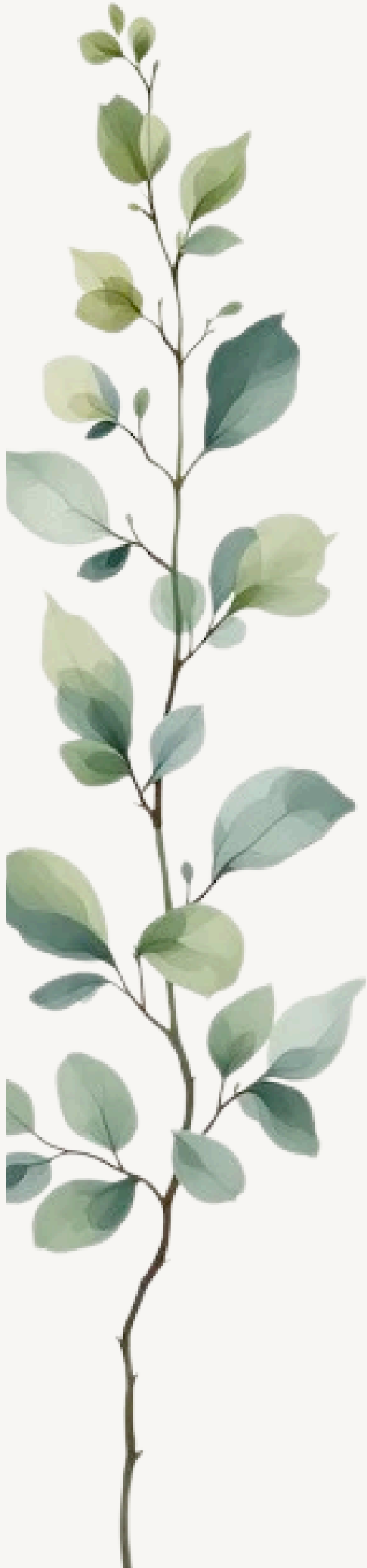
Pause the practice and return to orientation if you notice:

- A sudden increase in distress or anxiety
- Feeling disconnected, numb, or unreal
- Rapid breathing, dizziness, or overwhelm
- An urge to push through discomfort

To re-orient:

- Open your eyes and name objects around you
- Feel your feet on the floor
- Look for something neutral or pleasant in the room
- Gently move your body or change position

*Safety and choice always come first.



The Practices

Each of the following exercises may be used on its own.

Move slowly and follow what feels manageable.

Exercise 1:

Start by Noticing Where You Are

Before going inward, gently notice your surroundings. Look around and name a few things you can see. Notice one sound. Feel where your body is supported. This helps your nervous system know you are here and safe.

Exercise 2:

Find a Comfortable Stillness

Allow your body to settle into a position that feels easy.
There is no need to sit perfectly or breathe a certain way.
Let your body choose.

Exercise 3:

Notice Natural Breathing

Rather than changing your breath, simply notice it. You may feel movement in your chest, belly, or back. Let the breath move in its own rhythm.

Exercise 4:

Focus on One Neutral Sensation

Bring attention to a sensation that feels neutral or pleasant, such as warmth in your hands or the weight of your body resting. Stay with what feels manageable.

Exercise 5:

Invite a Supportive Image

If it feels right, imagine something that represents safety or support. This could be a place, a presence, or even a sense of being held. There is no right image.

Exercise 6:

Notice How Your Body Responds

Instead of thinking about the image, notice how your body responds. You might feel softening, warmth, or a deeper breath.

Exercise 7:

Gently Move Between Sensation and Support

If comfortable, slowly shift attention between the supportive image and your neutral body sensation.

Go slowly and return to what feels easiest.

Exercise 8:

Notice Signs of Settling

You may notice sighs, subtle movements, or a sense of calm. These are natural signs your nervous system is regulating.

Exercise 9: Let the Experience Complete Itself

There is no need to end this suddenly. Let your body
decide when it feels complete.

Exercise 10:

Re-Orient to the Present

When ready, notice the room again. Gently move your body and remind yourself where you are.

One-Page Reference Guide

QUICK OVERVIEW OF THE EXERCISES IN THIS GUIDE

- Notice your surroundings first
- Find a comfortable position
- Observe your natural breath
- Focus on one neutral body sensation
- Invite a sense of safety or support
- Notice body responses
- Move slowly between sensation and support
- Watch for signs of settling
- Allow a natural ending
- Re-orient to the present moment

This practice should always feel optional. If anything feels like too much, return to noticing the room around you.

Appendix A: Daily Practice Tracker (Printable)

DAILY NERVOUS SYSTEM CHECK-IN

Date: _____

Which exercise did I use today?

How long did I practice? _____ minutes

What felt most supportive today?

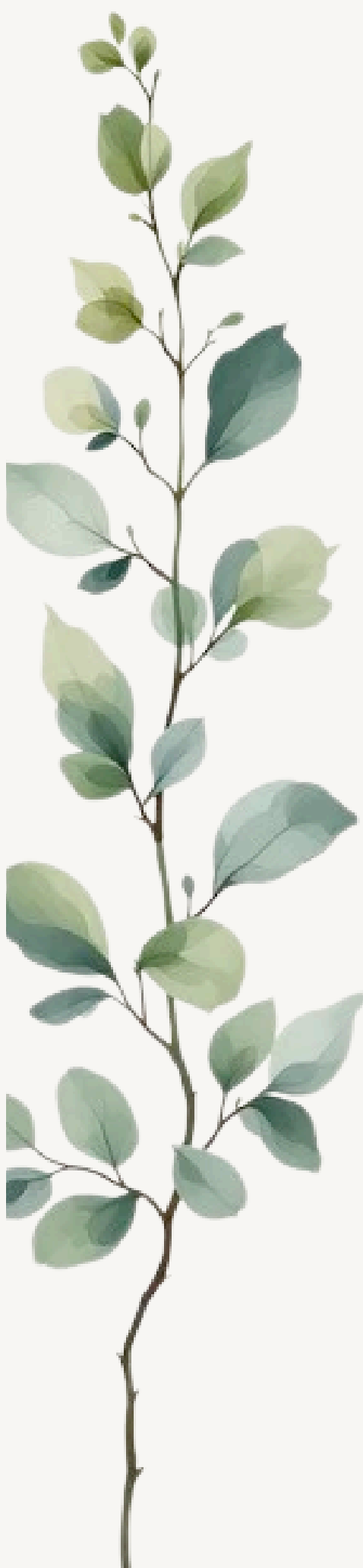
Signs I noticed (check any that apply):

- Sighing or yawning
- Softer or slower breathing
- Subtle movement or release
- Warmth or settling
- Sense of ease or quiet
- Other: _____

How do I feel now compared to before?

- More settled
- About the same
- Less activated

Optional notes:



Understanding Signs of Nervous System Settling

You may notice certain changes in your body during or after these practices. These are not goals to achieve or signals that you are “doing it right.” They are simply common ways the nervous system shows signs of regulation and completion.

You may notice none of these, some of these, or different sensations entirely. All experiences are valid.

Sighing or Yawning

Sighing or yawning often happens when the nervous system shifts out of alertness and into a more settled state.

This can be a sign that:

- The body is releasing held tension
- The system no longer needs to stay vigilant
- There is a natural exhale or reset occurring

These responses are involuntary. You do not need to encourage or repeat them.

Softer or Slower Breathing

Breath may naturally slow or feel less effortful.

This can indicate:

- Increased parasympathetic (rest-and-digest) activity
- A sense of safety returning to the body
- Less need for control or bracing

Breath does not need to become deep or slow to be supportive. Even subtle changes matter.

Subtle Movement or Release

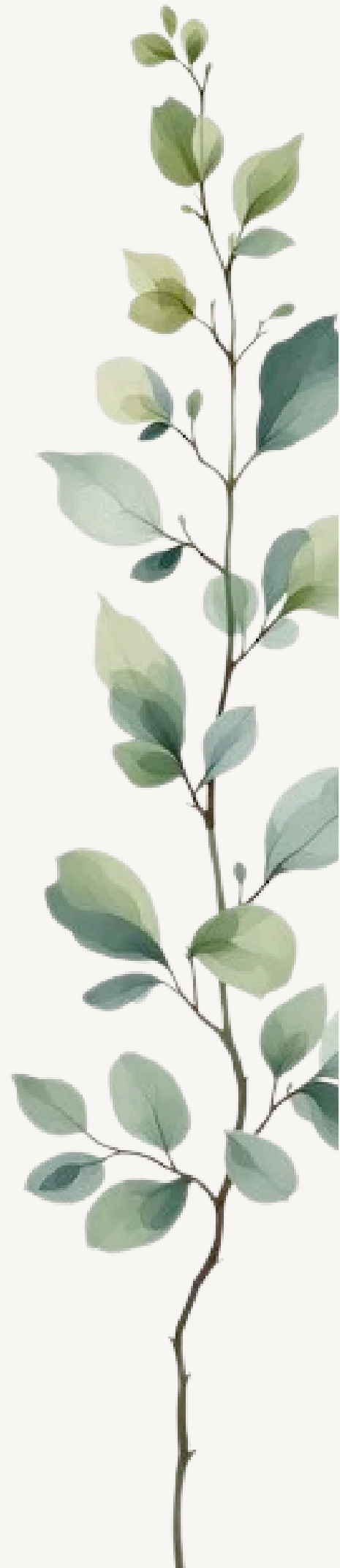
You might notice small movements such as:

- A shift in posture
- A gentle stretch
- A spontaneous adjustment
- A sense of something letting go

These movements can reflect:

- The body completing a stress response
- Tension resolving without effort
- A natural reorganization of the system

There is no need to exaggerate or follow these movements. Let them happen if they arise.



Warmth or Settling

Warmth, heaviness, or a sense of settling may appear in parts of the body.

This can be associated with:

- Improved circulation
- Muscles softening
- The body orienting toward rest and repair

Some people experience warmth; others experience a neutral steadiness. Both are supportive.

Sense of Ease or Quiet

A feeling of ease, spaciousness, or quiet may arise.

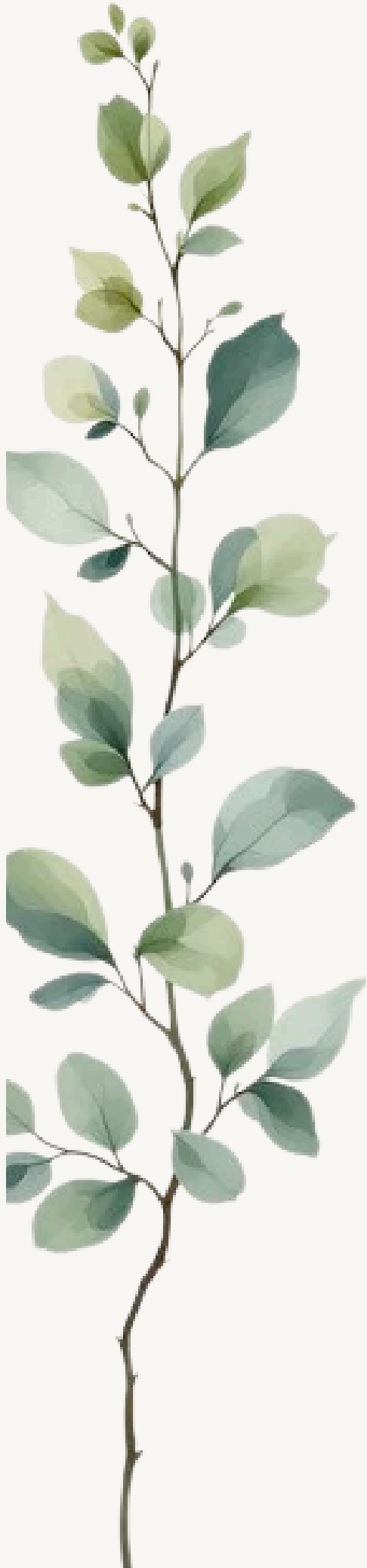
This does not mean:

- Everything is resolved
- You should feel calm all the time

It may simply reflect:

- A temporary reduction in nervous system activation
- A pause in internal noise
- A moment of rest

Even brief moments of ease are meaningful.



A GENTLE REMINDER

Signs of settling may appear during the practice, afterwards, or not at all. Regulation does not need to be obvious to be happening.

If you feel more present, slightly less activated, or simply able to pause, the practice has done its work.



Appendix B: Frequently Asked Questions

GENTLE CLARIFICATIONS FOR YOUR PRACTICE

Do I need to do all ten exercises?

No. These exercises are not a sequence you must complete.

You may choose one exercise and stay with it for days or weeks.

One step can be enough to support regulation. Following your body's preference is more important than following the order.

What if I don't feel anything?

Not feeling anything is a common and completely valid experience. Neutral awareness is still regulation. The nervous system may be settling quietly, without obvious sensation or emotion. There is no experience you are supposed to have.

If nothing stands out, simply noticing the absence of sensation is enough.

Is this trauma processing?

No. This practice is designed to support nervous system regulation, not to process traumatic memories or experiences.

You are not asked to revisit the past, analyze emotions, or make meaning of sensations. The focus is on present-moment support and safety.

What if emotions come up?

Emotions may arise gently during regulation. If they feel manageable, you can simply notice them without engaging or analyzing.

If emotions become intense, overwhelming, or distressing, return immediately to orientation by opening your eyes, noticing the room, or moving your body. You are always free to stop.

How often should I practice?

Short, consistent practices are usually more supportive than longer sessions.

You may practice:

- For one or two minutes
- Once a day
- Only when you feel the need

There is no required frequency. Even brief moments of awareness can support your nervous system.

What if I feel worse afterwards?

Occasionally, increased awareness can bring discomfort into focus.

If this happens:

- Pause the practice
- Return to orientation
- Engage in something grounding or familiar

If discomfort persists, this practice may not be appropriate at this time, and additional support may be helpful.

If emotions become intense, overwhelming, or distressing, return immediately to orientation by opening your eyes, noticing the room, or moving your body. You are always free to stop.

Am I doing this correctly?

There is no correct way to experience this practice.

If you are listening to your body, allowing choice, and stopping when needed, you are doing it in a way that honours safety and self-respect.

A FINAL REASSURANCE

This practice is meant to support you, not challenge you. There is no need to push, strive, analyze, or get it right. Your nervous system already knows how to move toward balance and settling when given enough safety, time, and choice. Nothing here requires effort or understanding. There is no outcome you need to reach.

Listening and responding to what your body needs in the moment is enough. Some days that may look like engaging with a practice. Other days it may mean resting, stopping early, or doing nothing at all. All of these responses are valid.

You can return to any part of this book as often or as little as you like. Take what feels supportive. Leave what does not. Trust that even small moments of awareness and kindness toward yourself matter. Support can be gentle, and progress does not need to be visible to be real.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karen is an Integrative Holistic Health Practitioner with nearly 30 years of experience in health and wellness. She supports her clients through somatic and trauma-informed care, with a focus on nervous system regulation, emotional release, and personalized, compassionate support.

Certified in Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy, Holographic Memory Resolution®, and other healing modalities, Karen offers gentle, client-centred sessions that honour the body's innate wisdom and capacity for healing.



ADDITIONAL SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

This guide is here to offer gentle, self-directed support for your nervous system. If you find yourself needing deeper care, more structure, or personalized guidance, support is available.

Reaching out is part of the healing process.

Ways to Work Together

Karen offers individual sessions and group programs grounded in trauma-informed, body-based care and specializes in providing support for those navigating overwhelm or nervous system dysregulation.

[Explore Support](#)

For questions or personalized support, reach out to Karen.

[Contact Karen](#)

Further Resources

Self-Help digital bundles

Guided audio practices

The Here and Now Deck

Additional somatic education resources

[Browse Resources](#)

Take what feels supportive. Leave the rest. Go at your own pace.