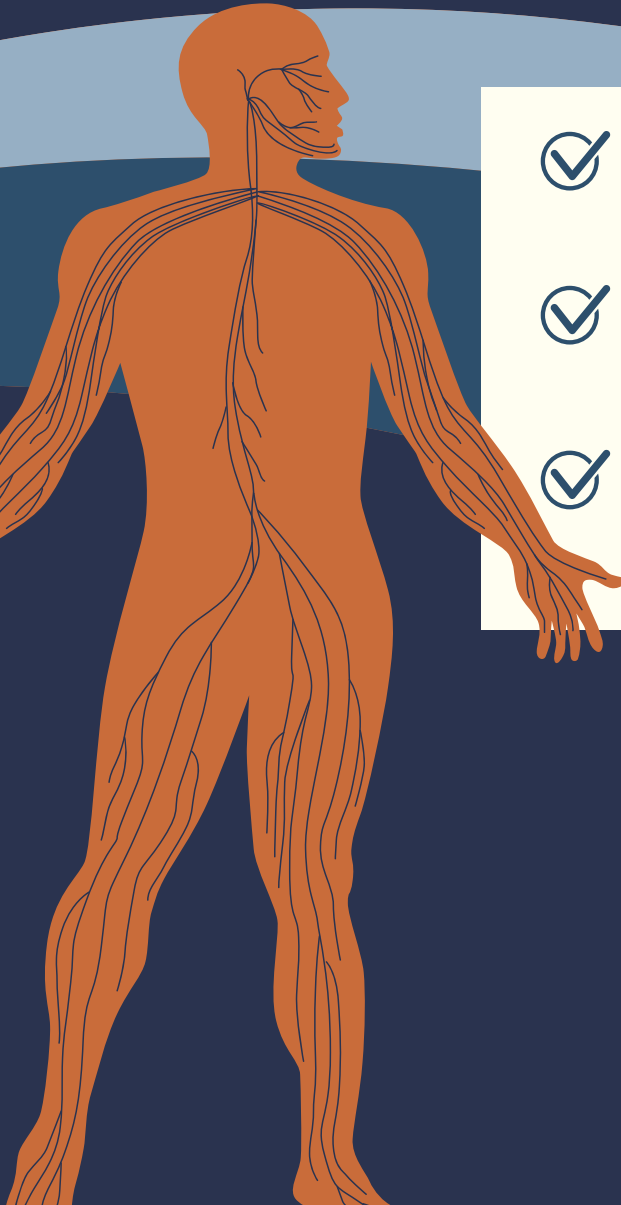


# Polyvagal Theory at Adaptive Edge Coaching

- 
- ✓ Sleep Better
  - ✓ Stay Calmer
  - ✓ Understand Your Stressors



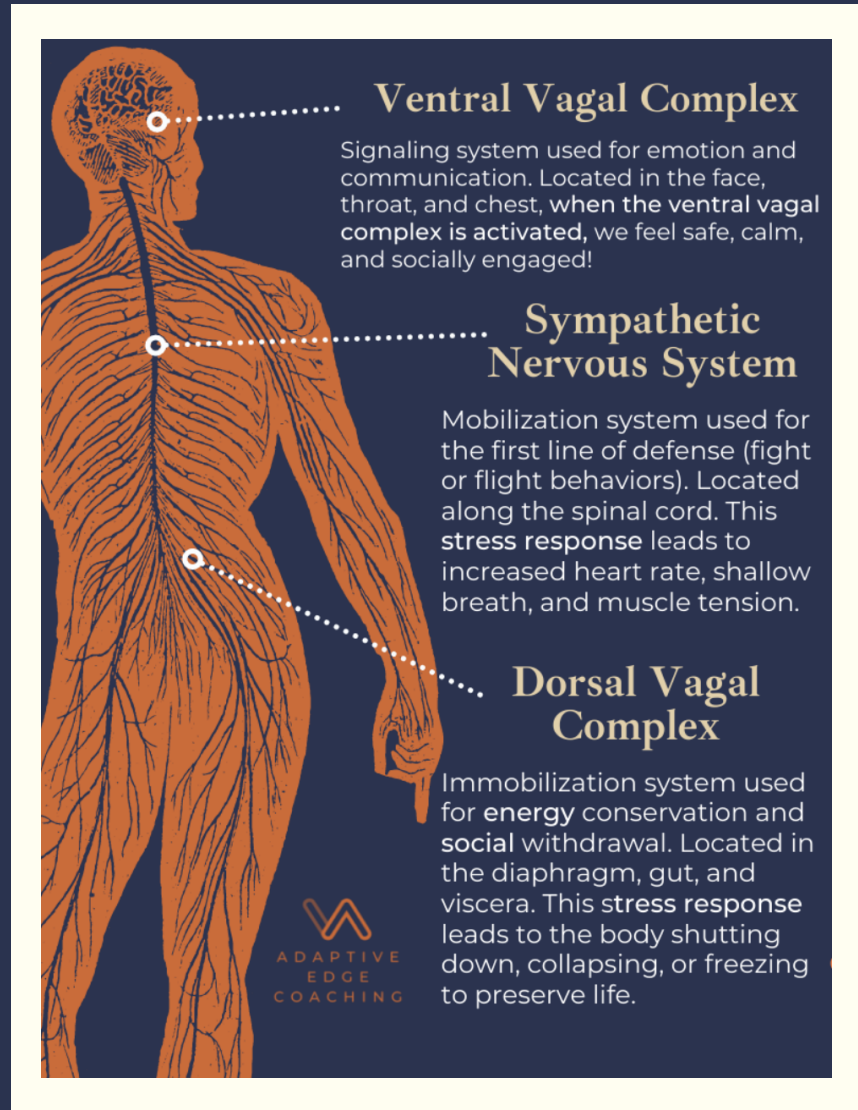
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Our Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) is responsible for regulating our essential functions. Researchers have recently discovered the massive responsibilities of the vagus nerve. It regulates the sympathetic nervous system, dorsal vagal complex, and ventral vagal complex.

Simply put, the vagus nerve manages our threat response system and our social engagement system at the subconscious level. The social engagement system involves establishing a “sense of safety” and this can be learned through coaching.

If the polyvagal theory is like a roller coaster, then the ventral vagal complex is when we are in the line, where we feel the safes and are enjoying the wait with our friends. The ventral vagal complex helps us with communication and connection with others. As humans are innately social creatures, feeling connected and engaging with others helps us feel more secure. We are living our best lives waiting in line with others for the ride to begin. This is the ventral vagal state.



## Sympathetic Nervous System

The activation of the sympathetic nervous system signals to our brain that something in our surroundings is a stressor. This is our fight or flight response. We start to prepare for the worst. We may get agitated, restless, and frantic. The signals get sent through the spinal cord to the peripheral nerves to tell the body to mobilize for a potentially sticky situation and our brain releases adrenaline, cortisol, and noradrenaline to amp us . In this phase, our body gets physically prepared to deal with a stressor by increasing our heart rate, tensing our muscles, and making our breath more shallow.

**How this looks:** You feel yourself becoming panicked, anxious, and fearful or maybe irritated, angry, and frustrated. You start to get overwhelmed by life and let those negative feelings overtake you. You might honk aggressively at someone while stuck in traffic, cancel plans with friends, or kick around some furniture.

# Dorsal & Ventral Vagal Complex

## Dorsal Vagal Complex

You have 2 stress response systems built into your physiology. The dorsal vagal complex was the first to evolve and is all about freezing the body with immobilization. This is our back up plan in case things go south and we can't fight or flee. We start to shut down. We may begin to block out the rest of the world to numb ourselves. This is located in the diaphragm, gut, and viscera.

**How this looks:** You feel trapped, helpless, hopeless, and numb. You shut down. You feel like you fell to the bottom of a dark hole and there is no chance ever getting out. We may act like an audience member to our own life.

## Ventral Vagal Complex

Social Engagement



## Sympathetic Nervous System

Fight or Flight



## Dorsal Vagal Complex

Shut Down,  
Collapse, or Freeze



## Ventral Vagal Complex

At Adaptive Edge Coaching, we focus on techniques for regulating these stress responses that can become overactive in some people, and helping you stay in the safe and social ventral vagal state. I work with each person holistically to uncover their triggers and glimmers. Some examples include specific breathing exercises, such as Pranayama, to release all of this emotion. The ventral vagal brings a sense of peace and allows you to feel safe, empathetic, and relaxed.

# Pranayama Breathing Techniques

One of the key tenets of yogic practice is pranayama. Pranayama is a technique we use at Adaptive Edge Coaching to help clients control their physiology. Originating in India, “pranayama” is a Sanskrit word that can roughly be translated to “control of breath or life.” Prana refers to your life force. Since we can consider that it is our breath that gives us life, pranayama can certainly be a very useful tool. This practice is mentioned in ancient Indian texts like the Bhagavad Gita and the Yoga Sutras.

So what does an ancient Indian breathing practice have to do with modern day neuroscience? A study by the National Institutes of Health found that pranayama as well as yogic practices help to control the body’s physiological reactions to stress and anxiety. Other scientific research has been conducted with similar findings; breathing techniques can help us to control our nervous system responses.

## **Alternate Nostril Breathing**

## **Three Part Breathing**

## **Breath of Fire**

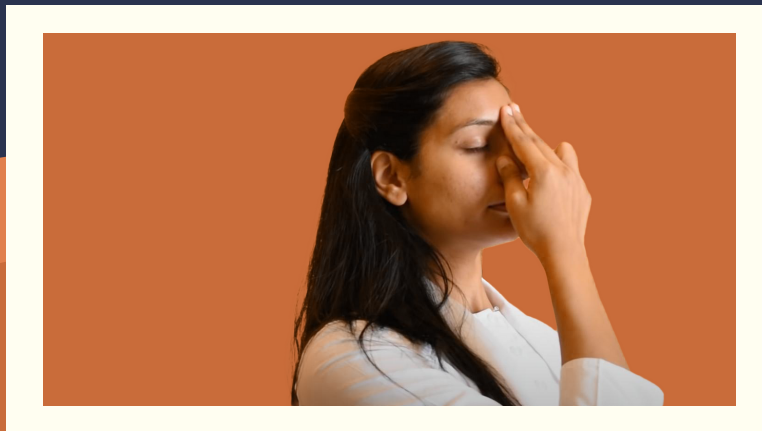
# Alternate Nostril Breathing

## When To Use

This technique is perfect for when you are feeling anxious, paranoid, or are in a state of fight or flight. When you feel like this, it means that your sympathetic nervous system is activated and your body senses some type of danger or stressor. Your parasympathetic nervous system is in charge of bringing your body back to a calm and relaxed state. This breathing technique will help activate your parasympathetic nervous system and calm your body.

## How To Do It

First, fold down your first and middle fingers. You will be using your thumb and your ring finger. Take your right thumb to your right nostril and plug that nostril. Breathe in through the left nostril. Then, pause at the top of your inhale and shift the hand so that the ring finger is now plugging the left nostril. Breathe out through the right nostril. Keeping the left nostril plugged, breathe in again through the right nostril. Pause. Shift the fingers to the other nostril and repeat the process. Aim to increase the length of your inhales and exhales. With more practice, you will be able to reach 7-8 seconds easily.



## Applying To Real Life

Oh no! You are stressed and anxious. You feel butterflies in your stomach because you have a big presentation coming up at school or work. You might use this breathing technique at your desk to help calm your nerves.

# Three Part Breathing

## When To Use

This technique is also great for activating your parasympathetic nervous system and calming your body just like the one above!

## Applying To Real Life

You just got in a big fight with your friend, spouse, parent, or whomever. You want to solve the issue but you are not in a good mental space to continue the conversation. Try this breathing technique to restore your calm energy. Then, you can go back into the conversation with a clear and relaxed mind.

## How To Do It

Start by sitting in a comfortable position. Place your hands on your belly. Take a deep inhale, let your stomach get full with air, and then exhale. Move your hands up to your ribs. Take a deep inhale as you let the air fill the space behind your ribs. Exhale the air out of the body. Finally, place your hands on your chest. Repeat the same process by inhaling and letting your chest fill with air. Finish with a big exhale.



# Breath of Fire

## When To Use

Unlike our sympathetic nervous system which mobilizes our body to prepare for a threat, the dorsal vagal complex can take our body into a stage of immobilization where since we cannot fight or flee, we freeze. The body shuts down, the mind dissociates, and this is commonly referred to as depression. While it can be debilitating and frustrating, it is important to remember that this is a stress response and your body is actually protecting you. This technique can help to get our body to emerge from its frozen state and give it energy.



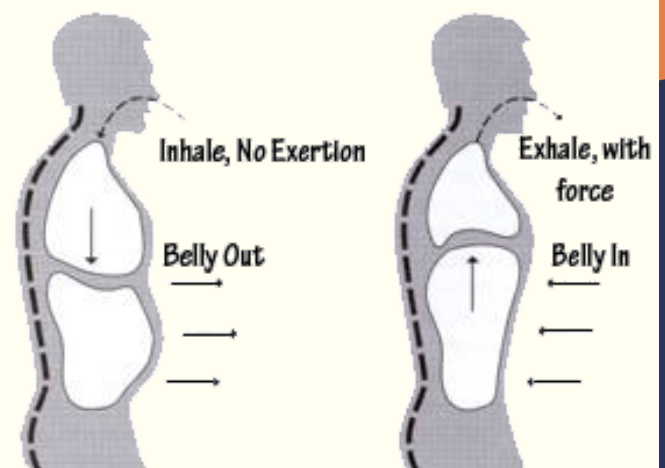
## Applying To Real Life

You are so stressed that the whole world seems gloomy. You have no desire to leave the house or even the bed. Try this breathing practice to help restore your energy and get you up and moving.

## How To Do It

Start by sitting in a comfortable position. Interlace your fingers together and rest your hands in your lap. You will use quick outbreaths to push your navel in on the exhale, while passively inhaling as your belly releases. This will create a sound that is similar to an animal panting.

### Inhale - No Exertion, Exhale- with Force





# Questions About Pranayama Breathing

**Which breathing technique(s) have you tried?**

**Which breathing technique(s) has been the most beneficial?**

**Have you noticed any changes in yourself?**

**Which breathing technique(s) do you plan on using in the future?**

# Triggers & Glimmers

What brings us into that survival state is called a trigger. **Triggers** are stimuli that alert our body to possible dangers. They engage our autonomic response system to mobilize the body for defense (sympathetic nervous system) or immobilize the body as a last resort (dorsal vagal complex).

**Glimmers**, on the other hand, bring us back to safety. Our ventral vagal complex gets engaged and ensures we have a sense of security and peace. Triggers take you down a dark road and glimmers bring you back to the light. Glimmers are our golden child. Glimmers and triggers allow us to bring awareness to the internal physiological mechanisms of our own body. Once we have better awareness, we have better control.



## Triggers

A trigger is any kind of stimuli that engages the body's sympathetic or dorsal vagal nervous systems. A trigger will push our body to either mobilize (fight or flight) or immobilize (freeze) itself. It is important to note that triggers are different for everyone. People's autonomic nervous systems are uniquely affected by various external stimuli. Different life experiences can cause different triggers.

## Glimmers

A glimmer is the opposite of a trigger. A glimmer is an external stimuli that engages our parasympathetic nervous system. The ventral vagal complex is the part of the parasympathetic nervous system that controls our sense of connection and safety. A glimmer can help us return to a state of peace and happiness.

# Triggers & Glimmers

## Examples of Triggers:

- Words like “forever,” “hate,” or “leaving”
- Seeing an expensive bill
- Being yelled at or physically getting hurt
- Smell of smoke
- Loud police siren.

## How to Cope?

Awareness is crucial to managing your triggers. You must be aware of the specific things that are affecting your nervous system. Then, you must forgive yourself for getting triggered. Remember that you should not feel guilty, weak, or ashamed for having triggers or even succumbing to them. We cannot heal without compassion for ourselves. Take the time to engage in self care practices.

## Examples of Glimmers:

- Words like “love,” “home,” or “peace.”
- Seeing your favorite piece of art
- Talking with your best friend
- Making your comfort food
- Smell of your mom’s perfume
- Sounds of the ocean
- Taste of warm noodle soup

## How to Develop Your Own?

Similar to triggers, people have various types of glimmers. Finding your glimmers is a process of self-discovery. It should be fun! Take a day to write down every little thing that brings you a feeling of safety or connectedness. These are some of your glimmers. This will require a lot of self-awareness but with some focus on the process, you should have no trouble bringing to light those glimmers that make you feel all golden inside.

**What triggers do you have? How do you cope with them?**

**What glimmers do you have? Write down every little thing that makes you happy to discover more.**

# Measure Your Progress

It's important that you apply the new information you've learned. This page allows you to keep track of your progress and goals. It's time to start your journey to living a more meaningful and productive life!

Goals:

Progress:

Success:

# Adaptive Edge Coaching

Coaching focuses on showing you how to make difficult changes in your life. Here at Adaptive Edge Coaching, you are taught the psychology and science behind why you feel and act the way you do. Learning the methods and information to change is very liberating. You have the freedom to apply this knowledge at any time in your life. Adaptive Edge Coaching allows you to express your feelings and provides you with the necessary tools to make essential changes in your environment and relationships.

Many therapists are quick to label you with a mental illness and view your natural way of living as “symptoms” of a disorder. Research shows that the medical model of mental health has had drastically poor outcomes. Adaptive Edge Coaching never diagnoses or medicalizes your distress, and instead focuses on how you can grow and change to make improvements in your life.

In Adaptive Edge Coaching, your coach will check-in on you with nudges and emails and there is an option to sign up for messaging support. Adaptive Edge coaching also implements principles of performance psychology to help you reach your goals as well as career development, assertiveness training, and group dynamics to ensure you excel in all areas of life. Beyond healing and supporting you through change, Adaptive Edge Coaching empowers you to construct a future aligned with your vision, values, and deepest ambitions.

If you liked what you read, set up a consultation with me at [\*\*greg@adaptiveedgecoaching.com\*\*](mailto:greg@adaptiveedgecoaching.com).