

THE CALM RESET

MINI-GUIDE

5 Simple Practices to Regulate Your Nervous System
When You Feel Overwhelmed

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Well Attuned
THERAPY

Restore. Rise. Renew.

INTRODUCTION

When life feels like too much, your body is trying to protect you.

Hi, I'm Melanie Perron, a therapist who believes that healing begins with understanding – especially understanding what your body has been trying to tell you.



When you've been under stress for a long time, your body learns to stay on alert. It's not doing this to punish you – it's trying to keep you safe.

Over time, though, this constant state of readiness can leave you feeling tense, exhausted, or disconnected from yourself.

And this happens because of how the nervous system works. When we face ongoing pressure or emotional pain, our body's natural "alarm system" – often called fight, flight, or freeze – can stay switched on, even when the threat has passed.

You might notice this as racing thoughts, tight muscles, or feeling shut down and detached. These are your body's ways of protecting you, not signs that something is wrong with you.

You're not broken. Your body has just been in survival mode for way too long. This guide is an invitation to begin relating to your body in a new way – with curiosity instead of judgment, and compassion instead of criticism.

Inside, you'll find gentle, practical tools to help you ground, self-soothe, and reconnect with a sense of safety.

Let's start by helping your body remember what calm can feel like again.

ANCHORING IN BREATH

Reset your body's alarm system.

Why This Helps

When you're overwhelmed, your breath is often the first thing to change, as it becomes shallow, tight, or rushed without you even noticing.

Slow, intentional breathing helps interrupt this stress response.

A longer exhale signals to your nervous system that it can start to settle, which lowers your heart rate, brings more oxygen into your body, and creates a sense of steadiness.

Even a few slow breaths can help shift you out of survival mode and into a calmer, more grounded state.

How to Do It

Try this practice at a pace that feels natural to you. There's no need to force deep breaths, and small, gentle breaths are enough.

Start by choosing one of the two options below that feels most comfortable today.

Extended Exhale

- ✓ Inhale through your nose for a count of 4
- ✓ Hold for a count of 4
- ✓ Exhale slowly for a count of 6

Box Breathing

- ✓ Inhale for 4
- ✓ Hold for 4
- ✓ Exhale for 4
- ✓ Hold for 4

You can also let out a soft sigh at the end of your exhale to release tension, or gently purse your lips as you exhale, as if you're breathing out through a straw. This slows your breath and deepens the calming effect.

Once you go through these exercises once, you'll notice the shift. You may feel your shoulders soften, your jaw loosen, or your thoughts slow down, even slightly.

Reflection Prompts:

- Do you feel a little more present or grounded?
- What shifts, if any, do you notice in your body or breath?

Tip: If deep breathing feels uncomfortable, keep your breaths small and natural. The goal isn't to control your breath, it's to notice it.

PRACTICE #2

SOMATIC ORIENTATION EXERCISE

Use your senses to remind your body you're safe now.

Why This Helps

When stress has been constant, your nervous system can stay in protection mode even when life is calm. This practice helps your body notice signals of safety and helps you shift towards a more grounded state.

How to Do It

- 1. Pause and look around.** Slowly turn your head left and right while tracking your surroundings with your eyes.
- 2. Notice what you see.** When you scan the room, notice the shapes, colours, and textures. Let your eyes rest on something that feels calm or neutral.
- 3. Notice what you feel.** Feel the weight of your body in your chair, or your feet connecting to the floor, the fabric on the couch or the air against your hands.
- 4. Notice what you hear.** Take note of the sounds you hear, and their varying tones and frequencies (high or low pitched, muffled, etc.).
- 5. Notice what you smell.** Try taking note of two scents – it could be your tea, your lotion, or simply the fresh air.
- 6. Notice what you taste.** Bring gentle attention to any lingering taste in your mouth or simply the natural taste of your breath.

Reflection Prompts:

- What feels supportive to me right now?
- What in my environment feels safe right now?
- What in my environment feels neutral right now?

Tip: If at any point your attention drifts to something unpleasant or you notice judgemental thoughts, gently shift your focus to something in the room that feels calm, pleasant, or grounding.

PRACTICE #3

THE SOOTHING TOUCH TECHNIQUE

Activate your body's calming response.

Why This Helps

When life feels heavy, you might notice your shoulders tighten, your jaw clench, or your breath shorten. These are signs that your body is bracing itself from the stress it's experiencing.

But when you're overwhelmed, your body needs more than positive thoughts – it needs cues of safety in your body and in your environment.

And oftentimes, a soothing touch can provide that safety cue to your body.

A gentle hand on your heart or a calm squeeze on your arm sends a clear message to your nervous system that “You're okay right now.”

It's one of the simplest ways to help your body settle, slow your breathing, and ease tension in the moment.

How to Do It

Choose one or two gestures that feel comfortable and grounding for you. There's no right way – only what feels safe and soothing in the moment.

- 1. Hand on heart.** Place one or both hands over your chest. Feel the warmth under your palms. Notice the rise and fall of your breath beneath your hand.
- 2. Self-hold.** Wrap your opposite hand around your upper arm and apply light, steady pressure – like a comforting squeeze. This exercise is to give you a sense of your body feeling contained. Let yourself hold this position and settle into it for 5-10 deep breaths.

3. **Butterfly taps or also known as butterfly hugs.** Cross your arms so each hand rests on the opposite shoulder. Alternate gentle slow taps from right and left. Or if could hold the butterfly hug without tapping and just apply some gentle pressure on your shoulders.
4. **Soothing using your senses.** Gently apply lotion to your hands or arms, noticing the warmth, texture, and scent as you move. Let the slow, caring motion remind your body that it's being cared for.

(Optional: Include small illustrations for each touch variation – clean, minimal, calming visuals.)

As you continue, let your breath move at its own pace, and take note of whatever sensations come up for you, like warmth, steadiness, shifts in tension or a softening in your body.

Reflection Prompts:

- What words would feel comforting to hear right now?
- What does this gesture communicate to your body – warmth, support, ease, or something else?

Tip: If touch feels uncomfortable or unfamiliar, start small. Try resting your hand on something neutral, like the arm of a chair, or touching a textured surface like fabric or a blanket, and then focus on the feeling of contact.

Over time, your body begins to recognize this as a gentle sign of safety and care.

You can use this technique any time your body feels tense, overwhelmed, or disconnected, like before a difficult conversation, after a stressful day, or simply when you need a reminder that support is within reach.

PRACTICE #4

THE BOUNDARY PAUSE

Create space before saying yes.

Why This Helps

When you're used to carrying a lot, whether it's at work, at home, or in relationships, it can feel automatic to say "yes" before you've even checked in with yourself.

This is often a survival habit formed over years of trying to avoid conflict, disappointment, or criticism.

However, a simple pause can interrupt that automatic response, as it gives your nervous system a moment to settle so you can respond from a place of clarity rather than pressure.

Even a few seconds of slowing down helps shift activity back into the prefrontal cortex – the part of the brain that supports decision-making, problem-solving, and healthier boundaries.

And over time, this small pause helps change old patterns of people-pleasing and overextending yourself.

The more you practise it, the easier it becomes to notice what you truly have the time, energy, and emotional capacity for.

How to Do It

Instead of answering right away, make sure to pause – even if it's just briefly – so you can create a bit of space between the request and your response.

Here are some answers you can try:

- Let me get back to you on that.
- I need a moment to think about this.
- I'll check my schedule and let you know.

These phrases buy you time to check in with your body, your energy level, and your priorities. The goal isn't to stall or avoid – it's to give yourself permission to choose what's right for you.

Reflection Prompts:

- What would happen if I waited before saying yes?
- Will saying yes support my well-being or drain it?
- Am I making space for what I need right now?
- What am I taking on that isn't mine to carry?
- Do I have the time or energy for this?

Tip: A pause isn't avoidance – it's awareness. Taking even a few seconds before responding helps your body settle, so you can make your choice from a place of calm rather than pressure.

If saying “no” feels too hard, start with “Let me think about it.” This short pause gives you space to check in with your time, energy, and emotional capacity.

In any case, a simple pause helps you respond thoughtfully instead of reacting automatically.

THE CALM PLACE EXERCISE

Use imagery and your senses to create a sense of calm.

Why This Helps

Imagery helps your brain and body learn what calm feels like again.

By picturing a peaceful place, you gently guide your nervous system from a state of stress or overwhelm into one of feeling grounded and calm.

This simple exercise can be used anytime life feels too tough, and it's a way to remind your body that calm is still possible.

Even a few slow breaths can help shift you out of survival mode and into a calmer, more grounded state.

How to Do It

- 1. Find a quiet moment.** Sit or lie down comfortably while letting your breath slow down and your body settle.
- 2. Picture a calm place.** Think of somewhere that brings a sense of calm. It could be a real place you've been, a place you'd love to visit, or even an image you've seen that feels soothing.
- 3. Engage your senses.**
 - What do you see (colours, light, shapes)?
 - What do you hear (waves, birds, gentle wind, silence)?
 - What do you smell or taste (salt in the air, fresh grass, your morning coffee)?
 - What do you feel (the ground beneath you, warmth of sunlight, soft air on your skin)?
- 4. Notice your body.** As you picture this place, sense what happens in your body. You might notice a softening in your shoulders, a deeper breath, or a little more ease.

Reflection Prompts:

- What details in this place feel most calming or safe to imagine?
- Did you notice any part of your body relax or feel lighter?
- What words describe the feeling this place gives you?

Tip: You can return to your calm place anytime, whether it's before sleep, after a stressful moment, or when your thoughts feel too loud.

If it's hard to picture, use a real photograph or object that represents calm for you.

The goal isn't to make everything feel perfect – it's to give your body a small moment of calm it can recognize and remember.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Small moments of calm add up.

Each of these practices is an invitation to connect with your body in new ways.

What's more, these practices help to teach your nervous system that calm is possible, even in the middle of stress.

You don't need to do them all or do them perfectly, but finding more calm in life begins with small, intentional moments, like a pause before reacting, a breath that softens your shoulders, a glance towards something that feels steady, or a soothing image that helps your body settle.

Over time, these small resets begin to change how you move through your days.

You may notice that you respond instead of react, rest more deeply, or recover from stress more easily, and these are signs that your system is finding balance again.

All things considered, it's a good idea to keep this guide nearby so you can revisit it whenever life feels overwhelming, or when you simply want to feel more grounded.

Every time you do this, you're helping your body remember what calm feels like.

You don't have to do this alone.

Keep in mind that these practices are simply a starting point.

They can help your body settle, your mind slow down, and your nervous system find small moments of ease.

But real healing happens when you have the support, space, and tools to go deeper at a pace that feels safe for you.

So, if you're ready to feel calmer, more connected, and confident in yourself again, I'd be honoured to support you.

[Book a Free Consultation](#)

ABOUT MELANIE

I'm Melanie Perron, a trauma therapist in Winnipeg with more than 20 years of experience supporting people through anxiety, burnout, relationship strain, and long-standing emotional patterns that feel hard to shift on their own.

My approach is grounded, relational, and tailored to each person I work with, and clients describe me as warm, easy to talk to, and clear in my guidance.

I blend EMDR, schema therapy, DBT, somatic work, and a strong developmental lens to help you understand your patterns and create meaningful, lasting change.

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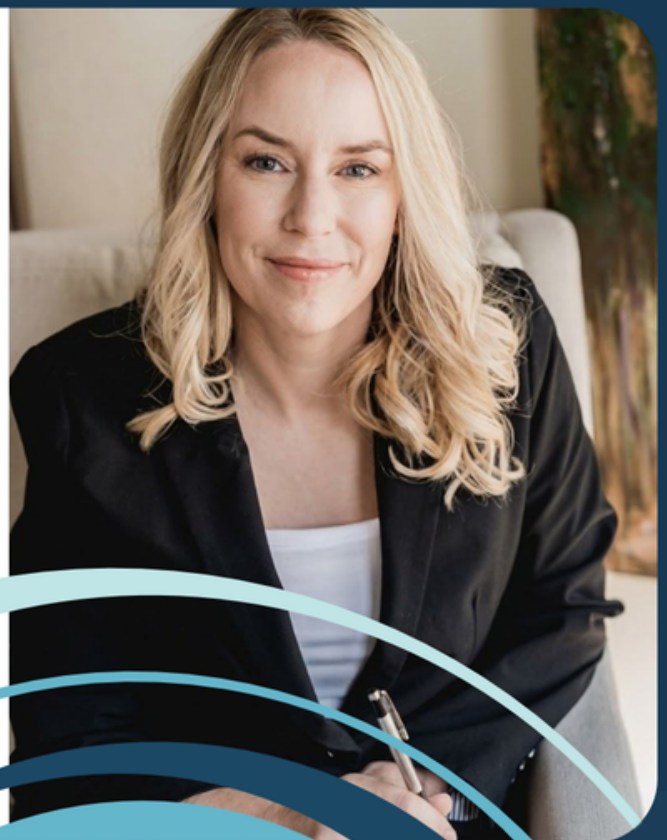
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