

FAST FACTS

Slowing down

Calibrate and regulate your nervous system

Our body is designed to toggle between two main modes of operation: **ALERT-ON** and **ALERT-OFF**. Also known as the **sympathetic** and **parasympathetic** nervous systems.

Sympathetic

Is where our brain and body are on high alert and the sympathetic autonomic nervous system will be controlling our physiology. You might also know this as the **fight or flight response**. This is an incredibly useful short-term mode that can be life saving in acute, life threatening situations. Thoughts and emotions can also turn this system on.

Functions during sympathetic mode:

- Dilated pupils
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Slowing down of digestion as energy is diverted to the muscles
- Activation of energy stores in the liver
- Production of adrenaline, noradrenalin and cortisol
- Processes not critical for immediate survival will be shut down or deprioritised

Parasympathetic

Is where our brain and body are on low alert, and attention can be paid to restorative processes and longevity. For example, digestion is under control of the vagus nerve and is stimulated in parasympathetic mode meaning you digest better when you are relaxed.

The parasympathetic nervous system affects most aspects of the body and broadly speaking can be broken down into these categories:

- Rest
- Digest
- Repair
- Reproduction

The challenge and the goal

Humans were designed to oscillate between sympathetic and parasympathetic. However the perpetual nature of the modern world tends to lead to sympathetic dominance. This means a lack of time spent in the parasympathetic, where our physiology and psychology are in optimum function for long term survival as the body prioritises healing and repair across all of its interrelated systems and organs.

In short we need to balance busy with re-charge.



What can drive sympathetic dominance

Busyness and sensory overwhelm including

- Emails
- Phone notifications
- Traffic
- Running late
- Loud, persistent noise
- Constant high pace of our day
- Our mindset
- Not being aware of our body

How to promote the parasympathetic mode

Start becoming **aware** of your unique physiology.

- Make a habit of checking in with yourself
- Use a wellness tracker (if appropriate for you)

Punctuate busyness with moments of presence and use the power of **micro-moments** to reset back to the parasympathetic

- Mindfulness techniques
- Eating without distraction
- Slow, deep breathing
- Doing one thing intentionally
- Focus on your senses, one at a time
- Go outside
- Batch high intensity work periods to ensure breaks before and after
- Walk away from your devices for a moment

Review your lifestyle **habits**

- Consider meditation
- Create time by setting boundaries