



Connecting in Community

with Dr. Shana Johnston

Returning to our Window of Tolerance

Decrease stressful input on your nervous system:

- 1) **Take a time out** - if possible, remove yourself from the stressful situation, even if it's just for a few minutes, to tend to your overwhelmed nervous system
- 2) **Take a break from electronics** - set limits on emails, social media, the news and other electronic input. Turn off notifications or set "do not disturb" hours on your phone. Buy an alarm clock and put your phone in another room at least an hour before bed.
- 3) **Release high expectations of yourself** - as women we often carry a larger share of the "emotional labour" of caring for others and keeping everything organized. There's often a lot of pressure to be everything to everyone. Remember that you are one person and you can only do so much. Be kind and gentle with yourself and be reasonable with the expectations you put on yourself.
- 4) **Boundary setting** - setting limits with others on how much you agree to take on. There is often an endless stream of demands for our time. Learning to say "no", especially when you already have too much on your plate is a very important skill to have.

Tend to yourself by moving, shifting or grounding the energy:

- 1) **Move your body** - dancing, walking, jumping on trampoline, yoga, tai chi, sports
- 2) **Do something fun to shift the energy** - engage in activities that bring you joy and laughter - tickle fight with the kids, laughter yoga, being silly, dancing to fun music
- 3) **Allow the energy to move through you so it can be released** - cry, "vent" with a friend, beat up your bed or scream into a pillow, move or shake your body to help release trapped energy
- 4) **Breathing exercises** - Slowing down and focusing on your breath. There are lots of great resources out there on breathing techniques. This link has some examples <https://www.verywellmind.com/abdominal-breathing-2584115>
- 5) **Cold water** on your face or a cold shower to ground the energy and activate the parasympathetic system



Connecting in Community

with Dr. Shana Johnston

- 6) **Journaling** - use your journal like a trusted friend to write down your worries, vent about frustrating situations or simply as a way to “talk out” things that are bothering you. You can then go one step further and give yourself some advice from the perspective of your inner wise woman
- 7) **Enlist the help of nature** - get outside and use nature to help rebalance your nervous system - feel the sun on your face, get out into the forest, spend time near rivers, lakes, the ocean, time in the backyard with no shoes feeling the ground under your feet

Co-regulate with others:

- 1) **Spend time with pets and loved ones** - carve out time to spend with loved ones to increase oxytocin and allow your nervous system to settle
- 2) **Physical Contact** - hugs, cuddles and physical touch also helps get oxytocin flowing and can help settle an overwhelmed nervous system
- 3) **Connect with a friend** - a heart to heart conversation with a trusted friend can help us feel supported and connected, reminding us we're not alone in our challenges
- 4) **Enlist the help of a therapist** - having a chance to work through some of our challenges with the help of a therapist can help us learn new skills, release trapped energy and allow our nervous system to settle
- 5) **Join with others in community** - joining with others in a support group, spiritual community or club with a common interest can help us feel a sense of belonging and allow us to co-regulate



Connecting in Community

with Dr. Shana Johnston

Use the space below to write down some of the tools you've used in the past to settle yourself when you feel angry, overwhelmed, depressed or "stressed out". Keep this list somewhere handy to remind yourself of the tools you already have to help you return to your window of tolerance.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____
