

THE VAGAL RESET

Breathwork, Botanicals, and
Somatic Tools for Nervous
System Regulation



THE NAVIGATOR

THE ROOTED RHYTHM

The Vagal Reset

*Five signals that switch your nervous system
from survival back to calm.*

A free field guide

THE NAVIGATOR

Navy veteran · Neuroscience practitioner · Composer

You are not broken.

If your mind starts racing the second your head hits the pillow — if your jaw is tight right now — if you've ever been told to “just relax” by someone who has never had to try — this guide was built for you.

Here is the first thing to understand, and it changes everything: your nervous system is not malfunctioning. It is protecting you. The racing heart, the shallow breath, the 3 a.m. wake-up — those are not defects. They are an old survival program doing exactly what it was built to do. The problem isn't that the alarm is broken. It's that no one taught you how to turn it off.

That's what this is. Not motivation. Not “think positive.” A set of small, physical inputs — signals — that reach the part of you words never touch, and tell it the danger has passed. In the next few pages you'll learn the five of them, and one complete 90-second reset you can do today.

What's inside: the one idea that makes it all work · your three inner states · the five reset signals · the 90-second Vagal Reset · a 7-day plan · where to go deeper.

Signal, not willpower.

You cannot think your way calm. You've tried. Everyone has. The reason it fails isn't weakness — it's anatomy.

The part of you that runs fear, heart rate, digestion, and sleep is older than language. It sits below thought, in the brainstem, and it does not respond to reason, pep talks, or good intentions. It responds to evidence — direct physical proof that you are safe right now: a taste, a sound, a slow breath, a change in temperature, the solid ground under you.

Most of that traffic runs on one nerve — the vagus nerve, the longest nerve in your body, wandering from your brainstem down through your throat, heart, lungs, and gut. Roughly eight of every ten fibers in it carry information from the body to the brain. Your body is talking to your mind far more than your mind talks back. This guide simply teaches you how to send the right message down that line.

THE SCIENTIFIC RECEIPT

About 80% of the vagus nerve's fibers are afferent — they carry signals from the body up to the brain, not the other way around. This is why bottom-up, physical tools shift your state faster than top-down thinking.

Porges, S. (2011). *The Polyvagal Theory*. W. W. Norton.

YOUR THREE STATES

Safe. On alert. Shut down.

Your nervous system is always in one of three gears. You don't choose the gear with your mind — your body shifts automatically based on whether it reads the moment as safe or dangerous. Learn to recognize yours, and you'll know which signal you need.

SAFE & CONNECTED

You feel steady, open, able to focus and connect. Breathing is easy. Digestion works. This is the state where you heal, think clearly, and rest. The goal is to spend more time here.

ON ALERT

Mobilized. Heart up, breath shallow, mind scanning, jaw tight. Great for a real emergency — exhausting when it never shuts off. This is anxiety, overwhelm, the wired-but-tired feeling.

SHUT DOWN

When alert runs too long, the system conserves: numb, flat, foggy, checked-out, no motivation. Not laziness — a protective brake. The way up is gentle signal, not force.

The five signals that follow all do one job: they walk you back down the ladder — from shut down or on alert, home to safe.

The five signals.

There are five physical channels that reach the vagus nerve directly. You don't need all five at once. Each one is a door into calm — and each one is something you already have access to today.

- 1 Bitter — A bitter taste on the tongue triggers a parasympathetic response in minutes.
- 2 Tone — Specific sound frequencies and your own humming vibrate the vagus into a slower gear.
- 3 Breath — A long exhale is a manual brake on your heart rate — the fastest tool you own.
- 4 Temperature — Cold on the face or chest triggers a reflex that instantly slows the system.
- 5 Ground — Direct contact with the earth steadies the body's baseline.

Let's take them one at a time — what each does, the science in one line, and one thing you can try in the next five minutes.

1 Bitter — the taste that flips the switch

The moment a bitter compound hits the back of your tongue, dedicated bitter receptors fire a signal straight to the brainstem and down the vagus. Salivation rises within seconds — your first proof the calm branch has switched on. It's the fastest taste-based reset there is, and it's why every culture kept a bitter tonic before meals.

THE SCIENTIFIC RECEIPT

Bitter receptors (T2Rs) sit not only on the tongue but throughout the gut, where they trigger release of calming, satiety-signaling gut hormones — a direct chemical line into the vagal system.

Rozengurt, E. (2006). *Am J Physiol Gastrointest Liver Physiol*.

TRY IT NOW A few drops of digestive bitters (gentian, dandelion, or artichoke) on the tongue, or a small square of 85%+ dark chocolate. Let it sit 5–8 seconds before you swallow.

2 Tone — sound as medicine

Sound reaches the brainstem faster than any other sense. Low, steady frequencies — and the vibration of your own humming — physically stimulate the vagus where it passes through the throat and inner ear, pulling you toward the safe-and-connected state. This is why a hum, a chant, or the right music can settle you before you can explain why.

THE SCIENTIFIC RECEIPT

Humming and chanting increase heart-rate variability and vagal tone, and slow, low-frequency sound has been shown to reduce measured stress and tension.

Kalyani et al. (2011). *Int J Yoga*.

TRY IT NOW Hum one long, low note on the out-breath — feel the buzz in your lips and chest. Six slow hums. That's it.

3 Breath — the brake you always have

Every time you breathe in, your heart speeds up a little; every time you breathe out, the vagus slows it down. So when your exhale is longer than your inhale, you spend more of each breath in calm. No equipment, no app, always with you — the single most reliable reset you own.

THE SCIENTIFIC RECEIPT

Slow breathing at roughly six breaths per minute, with the exhale longer than the inhale, produces the largest gains in heart-rate variability — a core marker of vagal tone and resilience.

Lehrer, P. & Gevirtz, R. (2014). *Frontiers in Psychology*.

TRY IT NOW Breathe in for 4, out for 8. Just the exhale twice as long as the inhale. Six rounds. Notice your shoulders drop.

4 Temperature — the cold reset

Cold on the face and chest triggers an ancient reflex — the same one that lets mammals dive — that instantly slows the heart and floods the body with vagal, calming signals. It's the fastest way to interrupt a spike of panic or anger, because it doesn't ask your mind for permission.

THE SCIENTIFIC RECEIPT

Cold stimulation of the face activates the diving reflex, producing rapid vagal slowing of the heart — a measurable parasympathetic shift within seconds.

Godek & Freeman (2023). StatPearls, Physiology: Diving Reflex.

TRY IT NOW Splash cold water on your face, or hold a cold pack to your cheeks and the sides of your neck for 20–30 seconds. Breathe slow while you do it.

5 Ground — contact with the earth

Direct skin contact with the ground — bare feet on grass, soil, or stone — steadies the body's electrical baseline and gives the nervous system an unmistakable message: you are held, you are here, you are safe. It pairs the physical signal with the oldest instruction there is — stop, and feel where you stand.

THE SCIENTIFIC RECEIPT

Grounding (direct earth contact) has been associated with reduced measures of stress, improved heart-rate variability, and better sleep in controlled studies.

Chevalier et al. (2012). Journal of Environmental and Public Health.

TRY IT NOW Stand barefoot on grass, soil, or stone for two minutes. Let your weight settle. Feel the ground push back.

The 90-second Vagal Reset.

This is the one to memorize. It stacks three signals — taste, breath, and stillness — into a single practice you can run anywhere, no equipment beyond one bitter compound. Do it before meals, before hard conversations, or any time the alarm won't quiet.

Orient 10 sec

Before anything, slowly turn your head left, then right, letting your eyes lead. This tells the brain the room is safe to scan — the doorway into every reset.

Taste 10 sec

Place a few drops of bitters (or a square of dark chocolate) on the back of your tongue. Don't swallow yet. Wait for the rush of saliva — that's the calm branch switching on.

Breathe 60 sec

Now breathe: in for 4, out for 8. Six slow rounds. Make the exhale soft and long. This is where the heart rate actually drops.

Settle 10 sec

Stop. Feel your feet, your seat, the surface holding you. Name one thing you can see. You've just walked yourself down the ladder.

That's the whole thing. Ninety seconds. The more you run it, the faster your body learns the route — until calm becomes a place you can find on purpose.

YOUR FIRST WEEK

The 7-day reset.

One signal a day. By the end of the week you'll know which ones your body answers to fastest — those become your daily tools. Check the box each day. Small and repeated beats big and once.

DAY	SIGNAL	PRACTICE	DONE
1	Breath	In 4, out 8 — six rounds, twice today.	
2	Bitter	Bitters or dark chocolate before your largest meal.	
3	Tone	Six long low hums, morning and night.	
4	Temperature	Cold water on the face once, when you feel the spike.	
5	Ground	Two minutes barefoot on the earth.	
6	The Reset	Run the full 90-second Vagal Reset.	
7	Your stack	Pick the two that worked best. Do both.	

GO DEEPER

Each signal has a field manual.

This guide is the on-ramp. Each of the five signals opens into a full protocol — the complete science, the daily practice, and the measures — in The Sovereign Field Library. Every title is on Amazon and free to read in Kindle Unlimited.

BITTER

The Vagal Bitters Protocol™

The complete 21-day bitters practice — the fastest deliberate path to parasympathetic calm.

[Read on Amazon — \\$9.99](#)

TONE

Acoustic Extraction™ & Sound Healing for Sleep

Frequency, humming, and the auditory-vagal pathway — and how to use sound to fall and stay asleep.

[Read on Amazon — \\$9.99](#)

BREATH & TEMPERATURE

Nervous System Reset

Breath, cold, and the full toolkit for walking yourself down the ladder, on demand.

[Read on Amazon — \\$9.99](#)

GROUND

Earthing & Grounding

Direct earth-contact as an electrical event — the protocol for a steadier baseline.

[Read on Amazon — \\$6.99](#)

[See the full Sovereign Field Library on Amazon](#)

Who built this.

I came home from the Navy with a nervous system that wouldn't stand down. They called it PTSD; I knew it as a body stuck in survival. The help I was handed didn't reach it — therapy asked me to talk about something that lived below language, and the medication numbed me until I stopped wanting help. For years, a wound I couldn't control was treated as a crime, and I cycled in and out of jail and prison.

What finally reached me was signal — physical inputs my body still understood. I traced it back through history to the Maroons, who built free lives and regulation from the body and the land outward, and I built the protocols that work.

The Rooted Rhythm is what came out of that — not a replacement for care, but the practice that gets you off the floor. It's for anyone still searching for peace.

Clinical care, a stable home, steady income, and real support are the floor. Everything above is the protocol.

KEEP GOING

Start the free 7-day reset today. When you're ready to go deeper, every field manual is one tap away — and free in Kindle Unlimited.

therootedrhythm.com

This guide is educational and is not medical advice or a substitute for professional care. If you have a medical condition, are pregnant, or take medication, talk with your clinician before starting any new practice. © 2026 The Rooted Rhythm Media & Wellness LLC.