Nervous System Regulation Toolkit

22 Evidence-Based Exercises • Quick Reference Card

Based on polyvagal theory (Porges, 2011; Dana, 2018). For use alongside Curran's Coaching Manuals.

Calming Sympathetic Arousal

Fight/flight, anxious states

• **Physiological Sigh**	1–3 breaths
• **4-7-8 Breathing**	2–5 minutes (4–8 cycles)
• **Left Nostril Breathing (Chandra Bhedana)**	5–10 minutes
• **Humming / Vocal Toning**	3–5 minutes
• **Progressive Muscle Relaxation**	10–20 minutes
• **Hand on Heart (Self-Compassion Touch)**	1–5 minutes
• **Alpha Wave Music**	10–20 minutes

Activating from Shutdown

Numb, dissociated, foggy states

• **Cold Water / Temperature Contrast**	15–60 seconds
• **Orienting**	2–5 minutes
• **Bilateral Movement (Cross-Lateral Walking)**	2–3 minutes
• **Gentle Movement / Shaking**	2–5 minutes

Grounding & Orientation

Disconnected, floating, unreal

• **5-4-3-2-1 Sensory Grounding**	3–5 minutes
• **Grounding Through Weighted Contact**	10–20 minutes
• **Feet on Floor / Earth Connection**	2–5 minutes

Self-Soothing & Co-Regulation

Overwhelmed, needing comfort

• **Self-Havening**	2–5 minutes
• **Butterfly Hug with Bilateral Tapping**	30 seconds to 2 minutes per set

Emergency Quick Tools

Acute crisis, seconds count

- **Cold water on face**
- **Physiological sigh**
- **Ice cube in hand**
- **Strong taste or smell**
- **Stamp feet hard**
- **Count backwards from 100 by 7s**

What State Are They In? -> Try These

State	Recommended Exercises
Panicking / Heart racing	Physiological Sigh, 4-7-8 Breathing
Numb / Shut down	Cold Water, Orienting, Bilateral Movement
Dissociating / Foggy	5-4-3-2-1 Sensory, Feet on Floor, Cold Water
Angry / Agitated	PMR, Gentle Shaking, Humming
Sad / Weepy	Hand on Heart, Self-Havening, Butterfly Hug
Can't sleep	Left Nostril Breathing, Alpha Wave Music, 4-7-8
Flashback / Triggered	Physiological Sigh, 5-4-3-2-1, Feet on Floor
Overwhelmed	Hand on Heart, Physiological Sigh, Weighted Contact
Manic / Escalating	Left Nostril Breathing, Alpha Wave Music, PMR

This toolkit is for educational purposes and does not replace professional mental health treatment. If someone is in immediate danger, call 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) or 911.