



YOGA ON THE INSIDE

MAKING YOGA PRACTICE
ACCESSIBLE TO **EVERYONE**

THRIVING not SURVIVING



How To Stimulate the Vagus Nerve Through Breath, Relaxation



Natural vagus stimulation explores gentle yoga breath and movement interventions that aim to stimulate and balance the vagus nerve. Slowing down the exhalation is considered the most direct way to balance the vagus nerve. This is especially effective when there is an emphasis on emptying the lungs through the engagement of the diaphragm and abdominal muscles. This also provides a gentle massage to the digestive organs. Emphasizing a slow, lengthened exhalation stimulates nerve fibers in the lungs to initiate a relaxation response.

How to practice STRAW BREATHING

Stressful and traumatic situations can cause shallow breathing, holding of the breath, or tightness in the chest. Every inhalation engages the [sympathetic nervous system](#) (SNS), and your exhalation stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS). Slowing down and giving resistance to your exhalation trains your body to use the diaphragm which can help you to feel calmer and more relaxed.

This next breath exploration involves imagining a straw between your lips. (You can practice this breath with a physical straw as well.)

Step 1. To begin, take a gentle inhalation.

Step 2. Now, purse your lips and exhale very slowly through your imagined straw until your lungs are 80 percent empty.

Step 3. Then, close your mouth and slowly exhale the last 20 percent through your nose as you engage the muscles in your abdomen and diaphragm to expel all of your air.

Step 4. Allow your next inhalation to come naturally, and take 3 regular breaths.

Step 5. If you would like, repeat this exercise 2 or 3 more times. Once you are complete, notice any changes in how you feel mentally, emotionally, and physically.