

Managing Mental Well Being

CALMING THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

Calming the nervous system is closely related to trauma recovery; individuals who have experienced trauma often have dysregulated nervous systems. Complex or repeated trauma can lead to a heightened "fight or flight" response in the body's autonomic nervous system. This can result in a chronic state of feeling constantly on edge, anxious, or reactive to stressors.

Swipe to see the relationship between calming the nervous system and trauma:

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Regulation of Hyperarousal

Calming the nervous system is essential for individuals who have experienced trauma because it helps regulate the heightened state of arousal. Techniques like mindfulness, deep breathing, and relaxation exercises can help reduce the persistent anxiety and hypervigilance associated with trauma.

Emotional Regulation

Trauma survivors often struggle with intense and overwhelming emotions. Calming the nervous system can help individuals control their emotional responses better, reducing emotional dysregulation and mood swings.

Recovery from Post-Traumatic Stress

Therapies like Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) can help individuals process traumatic experiences and regulate their nervous systems.

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Enhanced Coping Strategies

Individuals who have experienced trauma may turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as substance abuse or self-harm, to manage their distress. Calming the nervous system through healthy practices can provide alternative ways of managing stress and triggers.

Improved Sleep

Trauma can disrupt sleep patterns, leading to nightmares, night sweats, and insomnia. Techniques for calming the nervous system can improve sleep quality and reduce the frequency of traumatic nightmares.

Supporting Resilience

Calming the nervous system can enhance an individual's resilience and ability to cope with triggers and reminders of traumatic events. It can help survivors feel more grounded and in control when confronted with trauma related stimuli.

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Empowerment

Learning to calm the nervous system is an empowering step in trauma recovery. It gives survivors a sense of agency and self-care, which can be a crucial part of the healing process.

Calming the nervous system is an integral part of trauma-informed care and therapy.

Trauma survivors may work with therapists or mental health professionals who help them develop personalised strategies for nervous system regulation, which can support their overall healing and recovery journey.



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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Emotional Intelligence (EI) refers to the capacity to recognise and manage our feelings and to recognise and respond to those of others.

Recognising and managing emotions can help build compassion, improve communication, regulate mood extremes, and balance your life.

Five areas can be developed to improve your EI:

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Self-Awareness.

Recognising your feelings and understanding how your emotions and actions can affect others.

Self-Management.

Regulating and managing your feelings while waiting for the appropriate time and place to express them.

Empathy.

Having a high EI means understanding what others may be feeling and going through and responding kindly and thoughtfully.

Social Skills.

Social skills are vital to emotional intelligence. When you know how and what others are feeling and can communicate effectively, you're ready to interact well with others.

Motivation.

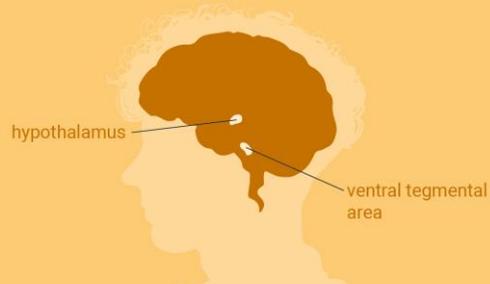
Emotionally intelligent people are motivated by things beyond money, fame, or success. They can also understand and desire the need to fulfil their own inner needs and goals.



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GRATITUDE

Gratitude stimulates the **HYPOTHALAMUS**
(a key part of the brain that regulates stress)



and the **VENTRAL TEGMENTAL** area
(part of our “reward circuitry”
that produces the sensation of
pleasure).

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Expressing gratitude can:

- Increase happiness.
- Decrease inflammation in the body.
- Improve Sleep quality.
- Aid in stress regulation.
- Reduce anxiety and depression.

Some methods of expressing gratitude are:

- Appreciate yourself.
- Write daily in a gratitude journal.
- Listen daily to positive affirmations.
- Practice meditation and stillness.
- Give gratitude to others.
(i.e. "I am grateful for your help.")



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INCREASING SELF REGULATION

Self-regulation means changing and managing how you act, what you think, and how you feel to achieve your goals by listening to your feelings, what's happening around you, and what others say.

Here are some practical self-regulation tips:

Mindfulness Meditation

Practice mindfulness to increase awareness of your thoughts and emotions, helping you regulate them more effectively.
(For more info see our previous post on meditation).

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Set Clear Goals

Define specific, achievable goals to give yourself a sense of purpose and direction.

Time Management

Use techniques such as the Pomodoro Technique to maintain focus and prevent procrastination.
(see previous post on Pomodoro technique)

Accountability

Share your goals with a friend or use accountability apps to help you stay committed.

Stress Reduction

Employ stress-reduction strategies such as deep breathing, exercise, or hobbies to manage emotional reactions.

Self-Monitoring

Check on your progress and make changes when needed.

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Healthy Lifestyle

Maintain a balanced diet, regular exercise, and sufficient sleep, as they can have a significant impact on self-regulation.

Limit Distractions

To enhance concentration, minimise environmental distractions, such as turning off notifications.

Positive Self-Talk

Replace negative self-talk with positive affirmations to boost self-control and motivation.

Seek Support

Don't hesitate to seek support from a therapist or counsellor for additional guidance and tools to improve self-regulation.



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MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

Mindfulness meditation focuses on developing awareness, attention, and presence in the moment and can be taken up by anyone.

Some key aspects of mindfulness meditation:

Awareness of the Present Moment:

Moment: Mindfulness involves paying close attention to your thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations, and the environment without judgment.

Non-Judgmental Observation:

To develop a more objective and accepting perspective, observe your thoughts and feelings without labelling them as good or bad.

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Focused Breathing:

Focusing on the breath and concentrating on the rhythm and sensation helps anchor your attention to the present moment.

Body Scan:

Mentally move through your body, paying attention to any tension or sensations, to release physical and mental stress.

Mindful Walking or Eating:

Deliberately pay attention to each step or each bite, savouring the experience.

Stress Reduction:

By training the mind to respond more skillfully to challenging situations, regular mindfulness meditation can help reduce stress, anxiety, and depression.

Improved Concentration:

Mindfulness can enhance focus and concentration, as it trains your mind to be less scattered and better able to sustain attention.

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Emotion Regulation:

You can gain greater control over your emotions by acknowledging and accepting them, allowing you to respond more thoughtfully to difficult situations.

Enhanced Self-Awareness:

Mindfulness helps you gain insight into your thought patterns, allowing you to make more conscious choices and change unhelpful habits.

Health Benefits:

Research suggests regular mindfulness practice can have physical health benefits, such as lower blood pressure, improved immune function, and better sleep.

You can find guided meditation sessions online, use meditation apps, or consider joining a local group. Consistency is key, as the benefits of mindfulness meditation often become more apparent with regular practice over time.

