



Your Nervous System Guide

5 Gentle Techniques to Calm Anxiety,
Reduce Overwhelm & Feel More Like Yourself

*A free resource from Michelle
Mindful Life Aligned Counselling*

You don't need to push harder. You need to feel safer.

A note before we begin...

If you've picked up this guide, chances are you're someone who carries a lot. You show up for everyone, manage more than most, and still find yourself wondering why you feel so exhausted, anxious, or unlike yourself.

The truth is: when our nervous system is stuck in a state of stress or overwhelm, no amount of willpower or pushing through will fix it. What it needs is something gentler — safety, rhythm, and care.

This guide offers five simple, evidence-informed techniques you can begin using today. No pressure, no perfect way. Start with whatever feels most accessible.

Understanding Your Nervous System

Your nervous system is your body's internal alarm system. It constantly asks: *Am I safe? Or do I need to protect myself?*

When it detects stress — from difficult conversations, hormonal shifts, sensory overload, or years of emotional carrying — it activates your **fight, flight, or freeze** response. The techniques in this guide send gentle signals of safety back to your nervous system, shifting it from *threat mode* into *rest and restore*.

When Dysregulated	
Racing thoughts, can't switch off	Clearer thinking, easier decisions
Irritable, snapping at loved ones	More patient and emotionally steady
Exhausted but unable to rest	Able to rest and restore properly
Overwhelmed by small things	Capacity to handle daily challenges
Disconnected from yourself	More present and like yourself again

01 The Physiological Sigh

Your fastest reset — takes under 60 seconds

What it is

A double inhale through the nose followed by a long, slow exhale through the mouth. Researched by Stanford neuroscientist Dr Andrew Huberman, this is one of the most effective ways to rapidly lower stress in real time.

How to do it

- Inhale deeply through your nose
- Before exhaling, sniff in a little more air (a short second inhale)
- Exhale slowly and fully through your mouth — as long as you can
- Repeat 2–3 times

Why it works

The extended exhale activates your parasympathetic nervous system — your body's natural brake pedal. The double inhale fully reinflates tiny air sacs that collapse under stress.

■ *Tip: Use this the moment you feel your chest tighten or your mind start to race.*

02 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding

Bring yourself back to the present moment

What it is

A sensory grounding technique that anchors your attention to right now, interrupting anxious spiralling. It works by engaging all five senses to remind your nervous system: *I am here. I am safe right now.*

How to do it

- Notice 5 things you can **see**
- Notice 4 things you can **touch** and feel their texture
- Notice 3 things you can **hear**
- Notice 2 things you can **smell**
- Notice 1 thing you can **taste**

Why it works

Anxiety pulls us into the future ('what if'). Grounding returns us to the present, where our nervous system can find safety.

■ *Tip: Especially helpful during sensory overload, panic, or moments of dissociation.*

03 Gentle Movement

Let your body process what your mind is holding

What it is

Movement — especially rhythmic movement like walking — helps discharge stored stress from the body. When we're anxious or overwhelmed, tension builds physically. Movement gives it somewhere to go.

How to do it

- A slow 10-minute walk outside
- Gentle shaking or bouncing on the spot
- Stretching your neck, shoulders, and chest slowly
- Swaying side to side with your eyes closed

Why it works

Stress hormones like cortisol are designed to fuel physical action. Moving your body metabolises them — completing the stress cycle so your nervous system can return to baseline.

■ *Tip: Walk & Talk Therapy at Mindful Life Aligned combines movement with counselling so your body and mind heal together.*

04 Self-Compassion Pause

The practice that changes everything from the inside

What it is

A brief, intentional moment of turning kindness inward — especially during struggle or overwhelm. Research by Dr Kristin Neff shows self-compassion is one of the most powerful tools for reducing anxiety and regulating the nervous system.

How to do it

- Place one hand on your heart
- Say: *'This is a moment of suffering.'* (acknowledge it)
- Then: *'Suffering is part of being human.'* (you're not alone)
- Then: *'May I be kind to myself right now.'* (offer care)

Why it works

Self-criticism activates the same threat response as external danger. Self-compassion sends the opposite signal — safety and warmth — which soothes the nervous system at a deep level.

■ *Tip: This works even if it feels awkward at first. The body responds to the gesture, not just the belief.*

05 Nature & Sunlight Exposure

Let the natural world regulate you

What it is

Even a few minutes in natural light and green spaces has measurable effects on stress hormones, mood, and nervous system regulation. You don't need a forest — a garden, park bench, or sitting by a window counts.

How to do it

- Step outside within 30–60 minutes of waking for natural light
- Sit near a tree, plant, or body of water for 5–10 minutes
- Walk barefoot on grass if possible
- Simply look at the sky or anything green

Why it works

Nature activates a resting brain state associated with calm reflection. Natural light also regulates cortisol rhythms and supports sleep quality.

■ *Tip: Especially powerful for women navigating perimenopause, when cortisol dysregulation is common.*

A gentle reminder

Nervous system regulation is not something you achieve once and tick off a list. It is an ongoing practice of returning to yourself — again and again, with patience and without judgment.

"Healing is not about becoming someone new — it's about coming home to yourself."

Ways to Get More Support

These tools are a powerful starting point. When you're ready to go deeper, here's how Michelle can support you further:

■ 1:1 Tailored Counselling Sessions

Individual sessions designed around you — your nervous system, your life, your pace. In person in Mandurah or online across Australia. Sessions from \$100 | NDIS registered | No referral needed.

■ Aligned Women's Collective — Founding Member Offer

A supportive group community for women navigating overwhelm, ADHD, anxiety and hormonal change. Connect with others who truly get it, access exclusive resources, and feel less alone on the journey. Founding Member Rate: \$27.99/month — limited spots available.

Ready to take the next step?

Click below to view all services and book your session.

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