HIGHER HEIGHTS FITNESS
BRECKSVILLE, OHIO

The 5-Minute Nervous System Reset

5 science-backed techniques that calm your nervous system in under 5 minutes — no equipment, no quiet room required.

01 WHAT A "RESET" ACTUALLY MEANS

Your nervous system runs on a seesaw between sympathetic (fight-or-flight) and parasympathetic (rest-and-digest). The problem isn't sympathetic drive itself — you need it to train hard and meet deadlines. The problem is getting stuck there with no exit ramp. A reset is a deliberate signal, through breath, temperature, sound, or vision, that tells your nervous system it's safe to stand down.

02 THE 5 TECHNIQUES

1. Physiological sigh — Two inhales through the nose (second one short, stacked on the first), then one long exhale through the mouth. The fastest documented way to lower arousal in the moment (Balban et al., Stanford, 2023).

2. Extended-exhale breathing — In for 4, out for 8. A longer exhale activates the vagus nerve directly, slowing heart rate.

3. Cold water on face or wrists — 30 seconds triggers the mammalian dive reflex, shifting you toward parasympathetic almost immediately.

4. Humming or vocal toning — 30-60 seconds of a low hum vibrates the vocal cords, measurably increasing vagal tone.

5. Orienting — Slowly scan the room, noticing colors and shapes. Scanning for safety is one of the most basic signals your nervous system uses to decide it's okay to stand down.

> **WHEN TO USE WHICH**
>
> Physiological sigh before a stressful meeting. Cold water after training, before a meal. Humming or extended exhales winding down at night. Orienting any time your thoughts spiral somewhere your body isn't.

03 QUICK TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ **Reach for the physiological sigh first** — Two inhales, one long exhale — the fastest documented way to lower stress in the moment.
- ✓ **Make the exhale longer than the inhale** — A longer exhale is what actually activates the vagus nerve's calming effect.
- ✓ **Match the technique to the moment** — Cold water before stress, humming before bed, orienting mid-spiral.

Sources: Balban et al., Cell Reports Medicine (2023) · Zaccaro et al., Frontiers in Human Neuroscience (2018) · Gerritsen & Band, Frontiers in Human Neuroscience (2018) · Porges, The Polyvagal Theory.

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