

Name: _____

Date: _____

My root causes are: _____

Step 2: Regulate Your Nervous System

Nervous system regulation is a very important part of addressing stress as the “root cause to all root causes”, but it is also the most abstract. Plus, it can often be hard to wrap our minds around how this work will help improve our constipation and reduce our daily bloat. **The most important thing about this step is that it’s applied consistently.**

Start by asking yourself:

- What is in my “stress bucket”?
 - ☐ Am I getting 7-9 hours of sleep every night?
 - ☐ Am I eating breakfast daily?
 - ☐ Am I eating balanced meals and snacks daily?
 - ☐ Am I not going more than 3-4 hours between eating?
 - ☐ Am I eating a variety of foods and plants weekly?
 - ☐ Am I having daily/complete BMs?
 - ☐ Am I staying adequately hydrated? Is it being absorbed (i.e. do I need electrolytes)?
 - ☐ Am I regularly working out to the point of exhaustion?
 - ☐ Do I ever skip a workout when I’m too tired or not feeling well?
 - ☐ Do I feel like I have absolutely no time for myself?
 - ☐ Am I running from one obligation to the next?
 - ☐ Am I currently or do I have a history of being on some sort of diet?
 - ☐ Do I have other medical conditions?
 - ☐ Do I put others’ needs (including my kids) before my own?
 - ☐ Do I react to a lot of different foods or have food sensitivities?
 - ☐ Am I going through a stressful time in my life (i.e. getting married, buying/selling a house, starting a new job, caring for a sick family member, etc.)?
 - ☐ Is my job causing extra stress or overwhelm?
 - ☐ Is there a relationship in my life that’s causing extra stress or overwhelm?

This is not an exhaustive list, but it will get you started thinking about all the different things that could be contributing to your “stress bucket” overflowing. **Our goal is not to eliminate all stress (that’s impossible), but it is to support your body and increase its tolerance to the inevitable stressors you will have to deal with in your life.** Think of it like poking a hole in the bottom of the bucket so you can let some of the pressure out and prevent it from overflowing.

Next, think about:

- What relaxes me?
 - Reading, walking, yoga, having a consistent bedtime routine, journaling (use the prompts at the end of each module for inspiration), scheduling a regular spa day or trip to the sauna, getting out in nature, getting coffee with a friend, adult coloring books, etc.
 - Try to think about activities that aren’t just about numbing out, but will help to actively replenish you.
- How can I incorporate more of this into my daily/weekly/monthly routine?
- How can I make sure I’m getting 7-9 hours of quality sleep every night?
- What am I currently saying “yes” to that I should be saying “no” to?
- How is my circadian rhythm doing?

****If this feels like it doesn’t apply to you OR it feels overwhelming to even think about addressing, start small. Start with calming your nervous system down before and during meals (remember **Meal Hygiene**).**

Consider adding in:

- [The Workout Witch](#)
 - somatic work for releasing stored stress and trauma
- [Nerva App](#)
 - strengthens the vagus nerve/gut-brain communication through hypnotherapy
- [21 Day Tune Up](#)
 - also has free YouTube videos
- [Gupta Program](#)
 - offers free 28 day mini course
- [Vital Side](#)
 - Free seven day trial
 - also has a podcast [Rewire](#)
- [Nervous System School](#)
- [HeartMath](#) - free

Circadian Rhythm Basics:

1. **Don't skip breakfast!** The body is primed and ready to digest/absorb food during the day. Essential for BS balance. Plus, putting off eating in the AM, leads to increased food volume in the evening, which is when our body is getting ready for bed and not focused on digestion.
2. **Get 5 min of morning daylight** (best practice is to wake up pre-dawn and watch the sunrise outside, at the very least get daylight on your face before blue light - i.e. screens) - this signals your body that it's time to start your day.
3. **Get 20 min of daylight in your eyes** (no glasses, contacts, or sunglasses) mid-day
4. **Spend 5 min outside at dusk/sunset** - this signals your body that it's time to wind down and your body will naturally start producing more melatonin from serotonin
5. **Wear orange, blue light blocking glasses** whenever it's dark outside (see brands in Product/Resource Recommendations list)
6. **Additional resources:**
 - a. [Podcast episode](#) on circadian rhythm and hormones

The Role of Exercise/Movement

Of course exercise/daily movement is a critical part of supporting a healthy gut, as well as an overall healthy body. However, it is possible for it to become counterproductive and to actually make things worse. Intense exercise for more than 2 hours actually decreases blood flow to the GI tract, which slows down how quickly food moves from the stomach into the small intestine and the motility of the small intestine overall. It also increases gut permeability (i.e. "leaky gut"), as well as the amount of toxins in the bloodstream.

On the other hand, no movement at all also slows motility. Plus, it promotes the formation of gallstones and increases the likelihood of insulin resistance.

Focus on strength training, improving flexibility and balance, walking, and other lower intensity exercises, especially while your body is actively healing. Really think about what types of movement you enjoy and engage in that without adding to your body's stress load.

- Aim for 30-60 min 3-4x per week
- If on calls all day - walk during the calls, stand during meetings or get an under desk treadmill
- Set a timer on phone for every 60-75 min to move for 5 minutes
- Doesn't have to be intense, just move daily

If you're finding it hard to cut back on your exercise (if you're not in a competitive sport) you need to think about the reasons why you feel the need to exercise so much/intensely.

- ☐ Does it have to do with how you feel about your body?
- ☐ Do you feel like you have to "earn" your food?