

*The free methods on one page. No gadget required. Start here for a month before you spend a dollar.*

## 1. Slow breathing (best evidence, do this one)

Breathe about six breaths per minute with a longer exhale than inhale. Simple version: inhale 4 seconds, exhale 6 seconds. Do 5 to 10 minutes, once a day. The long exhale is the active ingredient because the vagus nerve slows your heart on the out-breath. Slow and nasal beats forced and deep. If you get lightheaded, ease off.

## 2. Cold exposure (good evidence, real rules)

End your shower with 30 to 60 seconds of cold water and breathe slow through the gasp. Cold on the face triggers the diving reflex, which the vagus nerve drives to slow the heart. Colder is not better. Skip it if you have heart issues or are pregnant without a doctor's okay.

## 3. Humming, chanting, long vocal exhales (thinner evidence, still worth it)

Hum or chant on your exhales during the breathing session. The vagus nerve connects to the throat and voice box, so a long vocal exhale stacks nicely on method one. Treat it as a pleasant add-on, not a headline.

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### The weekly routine

Daily: 5 to 10 minutes of six-breaths-per-minute breathing, morning is ideal.

3 to 4 times a week: a cold shower finish, 30 to 60 seconds, breathing slow.

Optional: hum or chant on the exhales.

Track it: check your morning HRV (RMSSD) trend over weeks, not days.

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### Measure progress with HRV

Higher heart rate variability usually means better vagal tone. Watch RMSSD, measured the same way every morning (same time, position, and device). Judge the weekly trend, not any single day. It is noisy. A rising month-over-month average is the signal.

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### Safety: who should not use electrical stimulators

The breathing above is safe for almost everyone. Electrical vagus devices are NOT for you if you have a pacemaker or implant, a heart rhythm disorder, a history of fainting, a seizure disorder, carotid artery issues, or are pregnant, unless a doctor approves. Check with a doctor first if you take heart or blood pressure medication.