

Polyvagal Exercises for Couples

PRACTICE AT HOME

Co-Regulation through Eye Contact

- Purpose: Establish a sense of safety and connection.
- Instructions: Sit facing each other in a comfortable position. Gently gaze into each other's eyes without speaking for 2-3 minutes. Focus on maintaining a calm and relaxed presence.
- *Tip: If either partner feels uncomfortable, take a break and try again later. This exercise helps in synchronizing your nervous systems and building emotional intimacy.*

Rhythmic Breathing

- Purpose: Activate the ventral vagal pathway, promoting a state of calm.
- Instructions: Sit or lie down comfortably. Hold hands and synchronize your breathing —inhale deeply through your nose for a count of four, hold for four, and exhale through your mouth for a count of six. Repeat for 5-10 minutes.
- *Tip: You can enhance this exercise by adding a gentle hum on the exhale, which stimulates the vagus nerve.*

Gentle Touch and Massage

- Purpose: Reduce stress and increase feelings of safety through physical contact.
- Instructions: Take turns giving each other a gentle hand, foot, or shoulder massage. Use slow, soothing strokes and focus on being fully present with each other.
- *Tip: Use a calming lotion or oil to enhance the experience. Ensure both partners are comfortable and consent to the touch.*

Grounding Together

- Purpose: Stay present and connected, especially during moments of tension.
- Instructions: When either partner feels overwhelmed, practice grounding exercises together. Sit close, touch hands, and take turns describing three things you can see, three things you can hear, and three things you can feel (both physically and emotionally).
- *Tip: This exercise can help bring both partners back to the present moment, reducing anxiety and fostering connection.*

Voice and Tone Matching

- Purpose: Harmonize your nervous systems through vocalization.
- Instructions: Sit facing each other and take turns humming or singing a calming tune. Match each other's tone and rhythm, creating a shared, soothing experience.
- *Tip: Choose a song or hum that both find relaxing. This exercise can be particularly effective in creating a sense of unity and calm.*

Shared Gratitude Practice

- Purpose: Shift focus to positive emotions and mutual appreciation.
- Instructions: Sit together in a quiet space. Take turns sharing three things you appreciate about each other. Focus on specific behaviors or qualities.
- *Tip: This practice helps to reinforce positive feelings and strengthen your emotional bond.*