



# Nourishing Foods + Cleanse

5 DAYS OF EASY & NOURISHING FOODS FOR YOUR BODY, MIND & SPIRIT

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## Neuro-Sensory Activators

### Exercises that Stimulate the Brain and Vagus Nerve

adapted from the Whole Journey

Much is said about the “Gut-Brain Connection”, but that’s only half the story. A “connection” implies a response, hence the “Brain-Gut Connection”. The communications between the intestinal microbiome and the brain and the brain back to the intestinal microbiota are “bi- directional” – an actual conversation.

Sometimes the communication breaks down. This is known as Sensory Motor Amnesia, the brain forgets to regulate autonomic body functions. What often happens is the brain fails to regulate proper motility and we don’t have proper elimination.

Think of it like the brain putting its fingers in its ears and saying, “La, la, la, la, la...I I don’t hear you” really loud. Thus, we need some exercises to help the brain, nervous system, and the musculoskeletal system better regulate the daily motions.

Slow motility, where the brain loses the direction over the bowels, can occur due to taking antibiotics, anesthesia, and opiate or anti-depression/anti-anxiety drugs and is further compounded by a diet too high in starch and too low in magnesium.

Neuro-Sensory Amnesia also occurs for a variety of other reasons including: physical and emotional trauma; and “if you don’t use it, you lose it” situations such as frequent use of laxatives, enemas, thyroid medications, digestive aids, and environmental toxin exposure (causes inflammation of hypothalamus and cell membranes.)

To awaken from sensory motor amnesia we can do a twice-daily exercise that tickles the brain and vagus nerve to re-engage their jobs of helping the brain regulate the autonomic body functions.

There are several exercises here, so choose the one you like. The best choice is to rotate through these exercises, doing one each day, as each one works on a different brain connection with different intensity. The one you are most comfortable with might be the least effective for you for that very reason - you are comfortable and familiar with it. So plan on doing them all and rotating.

The most popular method is singing loudly. But if you are already an avid singer in the choir, perform backup vocals for Mick Jagger on tour, or appear regularly at Carnegie Hall; then singing is not going to be something new and enlivening. But if you don't sing very often, here's your chance to prepare for American Idol and loosen those pipes up while driving in your car or in the shower.

## Exercise 1



**Singing A Happy Song Boldly with Operatic Volume.** Choose a song to sing. Make it happy and fun. Belt it out loudly, with all the feeling you can muster, 3-5 minutes, twice a day, on singing days.

Pick a fun and easy song that you know or even a mantra. I like the songs Whistle A Happy Tune, Do Ray Me, or the mantra Ek Ong Kar Sat Gur Prasad. Choose something positive as it may get stuck in your head for awhile.

## Exercise 2



**Gargling.** Take a full glass of pure water and gargle your way through each sip. It's fine to swallow the water as part of your daily water intake. Gargle with enthusiasm and push your limits. This technique only works when you gargle longer than you are used to. Twice a day on gargle days.

This method has been researched for over 30 years via the Carrick Institute; thus it's a tried-and-true method. Like singing loudly in the car or shower this one is easy to do in the shower or at the bathroom sink. A strong and enthusiastic gargling episode sends signals directly to the vagus nerve via the gargle muscles with a message, albeit garbled, that is interpreted as a wake-up call of re-engagement of the brain/nerve function. Some people will experience lacrimation (tearing of the eyes) during this process, which is nothing to worry about.

## Exercise 3



**Gagging.** Gently lay the tongue depressor on the back of your tongue, then firmly press down. This will initiate the body's "retching reflex" called "gagging" and an instinctive muscle contraction will occur. Kindly note that you are NOT jabbing the back of your throat. Do 5 gags to start, building up to 10.

The "gag reflex" strongly stimulates the vagus nerve. Use a tongue depressor to the back of your throat and gag. Please avoid jabbing your tender throat with a toothbrush handle or acrylic nail file. Instead, get wooden tongue depressors at the drug store. Beyond gargling, gagging is an even stronger wake-up call to initiate better neuro-regulation when it's become dulled. Not as much fun, but it's a powerful innate response that engages massive self-regulatory processes.

A good gagging involves the esophagus and even the stomach, so best to do this exercise on an empty stomach. After a good gag (oxymoron?), it's okay to rest shortly before repeating. Sometimes repeating a gag quickly engages a stronger reaction and this is good.