

Parasympathetic Nervous System

Sympathetic nervous system

Responsible for rest/digest function	Activated by stress/perceived threats
Activated by progressive relaxation, yoga, Tai chi, Qi gong, meditation, hypnosis, nature walks, abdominal breathing, visualization of tranquil places.	Responsible for survival – gives a burst of energy
Can be produced by voluntary activities	Involuntary response
Heart rate drops, blood pressure drops,	Increased heart rate, rapid breathing,
Muscles loosen and relax, cortisol levels fall	Muscle tension, release of adrenalin/ cortisol/epinephrine
Able to examine situations calmly	More blood goes into the large muscle groups; blood sugar and fats are released into the body
Body starts to calm	Less blood flow to stomach/intestines
Activities can interrupt the stress response before it becomes full blown	Thinking may be disjointed and erratic
	Unable to problem solve
	Senses become sharper
	If this response becomes chronic, health is damaged