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Judy is an Integrative Health and Wellness Coach and a HeartMath® Certified Practitioner and Trainer.

Judy uses a heart-focused, skills-based approach to helping individuals lower stress, transform anxiety, manage trauma symptoms, and bring their big-hearted, authentic selves to live.

Her work draws heavily on the neurobiology of changes and self-compassion.

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SQUARE BREATHING

This exercise can help activate the parasympathetic, rest-and-digest, branch of the nervous system.

When we are constantly anxious, our fight-or-flight systems are in a state of chronic activation, the rest-and-digest part of the nervous system is inhibited. Blood flow to our digestive system is reduced, and our ability to digest food and moving things through our intestines is compromised.

This can result in digestive issues like irritable bowel syndrome, nausea, chronic diarrhea or constipation, bloating and gas, acid reflux, or feeling like your food is just sitting like a lump in your stomach.

Square breathing exercise

Square Breathing is a controlled breathing technique that activates the parasympathetic, rest-and-digest, branch of the nervous system.

Inhale 4 seconds, Hold your breath for 4 seconds
Exhale 4 seconds, Hold for 4 seconds

Try this for a few cycles. Once you are comfortable with it, exhale by pursing your lips and blowing as if you are exhaling through a straw. Some people like to make the exhale a bit longer, maybe 6 seconds. Practice this exercise for 3-5 minutes before meals.

Why does this work?

The vagus nerve is the longest nerve in the body. It starts near the head and wanders through the body, eventually connecting to the viscera. When we are stressed or anxious, the chemical signals between the gut and the brain can get disrupted and out of balance. Over time, the function of the vagus nerve can become impaired causing gastrointestinal issues.

Paced breathing techniques like Square Breathing can calm the nervous system and activate and tone the vagus nerve to improve digestive function.