

Exercise: Orienting

(1-3 min)

ABOUT

The stress response can sometimes loop, going something like this:

- A stressful stimulus happens
(something external or a thought, memory, future projection)
- The nervous system fires off a fight/flight/freeze/fawn response.
- The body, in its stress state, relays to the mind: “*We aren’t safe!*”
- So the mind kicks up even more, to try to figure out how to manage the perceived threat.
- Which activates the nervous system even further...and so on.

The nervous system at that point isn’t even responding to real life. It’s bouncing off thoughts and amplifying the stress state over and over.

The Orienting Exercise helps the body connect to your environment and get real-time data about the actual safety, danger and resources around you. It can help the nervous system settle a bit and escape the mind-body stress loop — leaving you in a clearer state to assess the situation and respond appropriately.

WHEN TO USE IT

The Orienting Exercise can be helpful when ruminating, stressed, irritable, anxious or sped-up. But, also try it when you feel neutral or good. This will reinforce the habit of turning your attention outward, deepening your baseline regulation. (Also it’s good for your eyes to look up from the screen now and then!)

EXERCISE

- **Slowly look around your space.**
- **Let your eyes lead and your head and neck follow.**
Let your eyes be soft like an infant, absorbed in the newness of the world.
- **What do you enjoy looking at?**
- **What colors, shapes, textures, light, shadow, movements do you notice?**
- **How is your body responding to what you see?**
What sensations do you notice?
How do they subtly change as time goes on?
- **Take a couple full minutes to track outwardly and inwardly.**
Be luxurious with it.

OPTIONAL

- **Combine Orienting with “Tracking Activation”**
 - What is your 1-10 Activation Level before Orienting?
 - What is the Level after Orienting?
- **Combine Orienting with “Slowing Down 2%”**
 - After you Orient, slow down 2%
 - How do the sensations change?