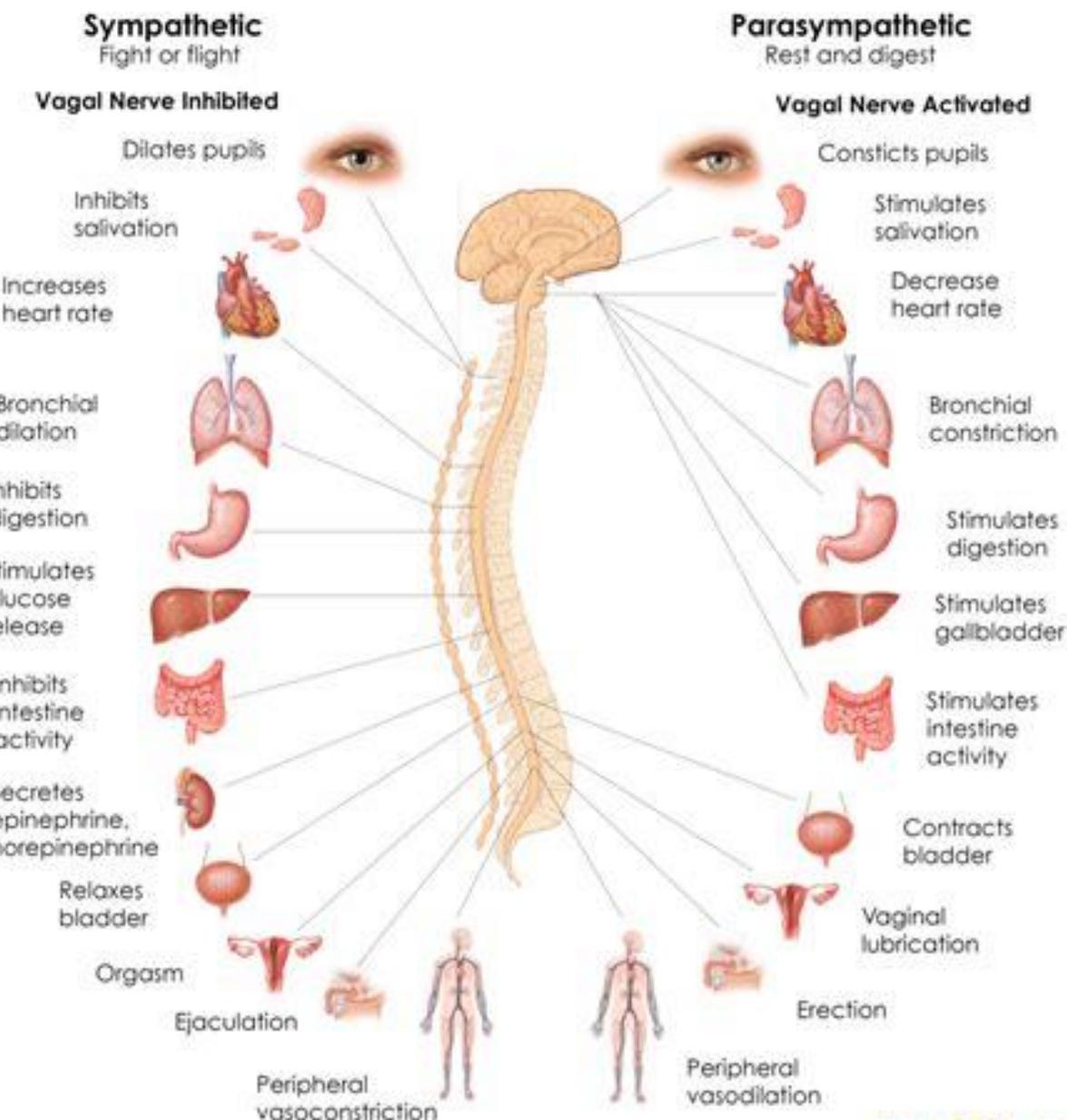


Introduction to our autonomic nervous system

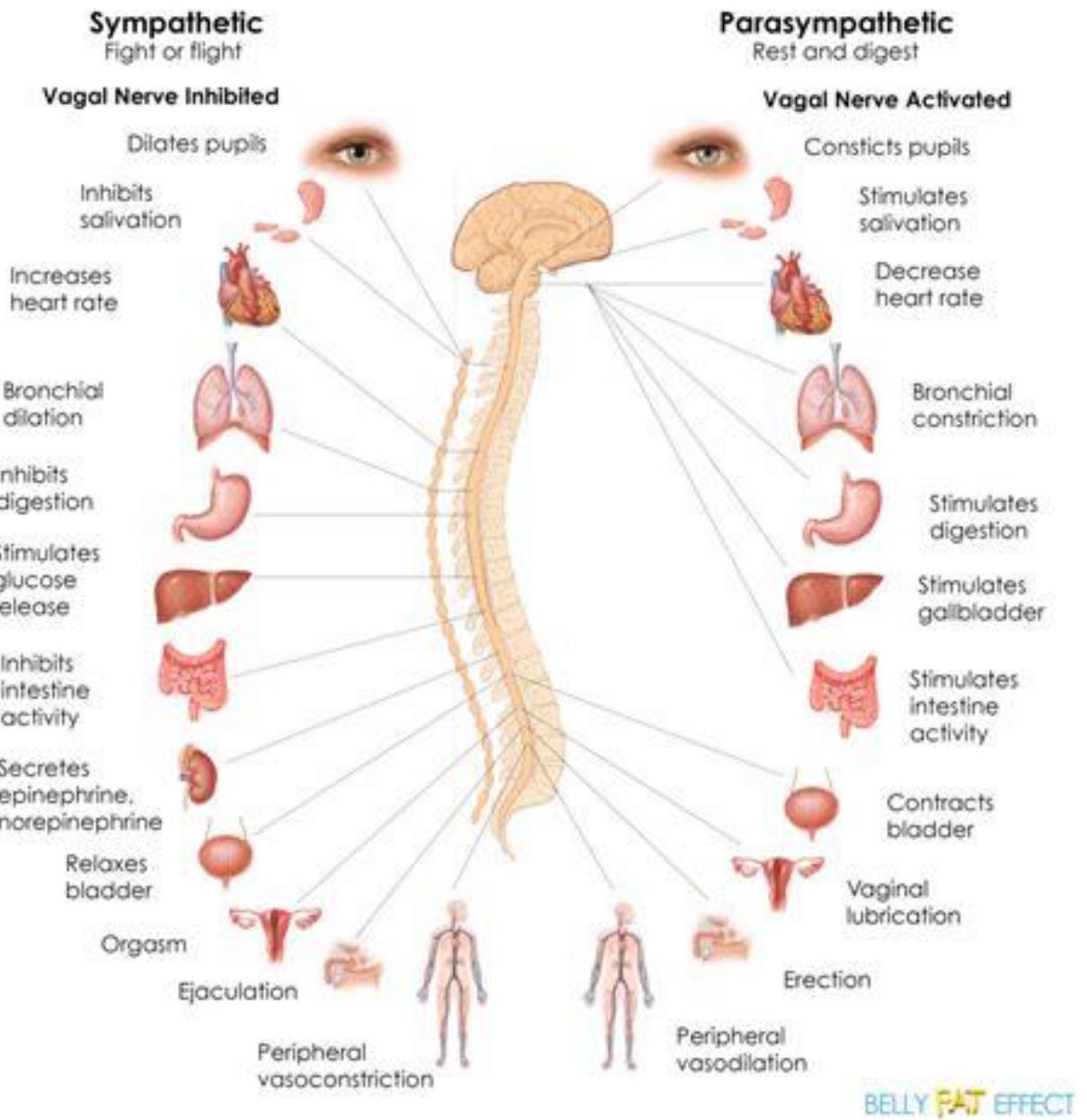
Part 1: The sympathetic nervous system

- Stress/pain = signal of (real or perceived) threat/danger
- Signal of threat/danger activates our sympathetic nervous system to prepare us for 'fight or flight'
- Vagal nerve inhibited
- Adrenalin and cortisol neurotransmitters are released
- Physiological changes occur e.g. heart beats faster, breathing changes, muscles tense, digestive changes, pupils dilate
- To allow us to protect ourselves against threat if needed. We also become more sensitive and vigilant to other threat/danger
- Our pain becomes 'louder'



Part 2: The parasympathetic nervous system

- Our natural ‘soothing’ system
- Opposite system, designed to calm us down when threat/danger have decreased
- Vagal nerve activated
- Our body prepares for “rest and digest”
- Physiological changes occur e.g. heart beat slows to normal, breathing returns to normal, muscles relax, digestive functions return, pupils constrict
- Our pain becomes ‘quieter’



Benefits of relaxation

Definition:

- Relaxation/breathing techniques are activities that relieve muscle tension, induce a quiet body response (self-soothing) and rebuild energy resource.
- Techniques include deep breathing exercises, [guided] imagery [visualisations], meditation and other techniques to calm the body and mind.

Relaxation techniques/methods are used to promote:

- Decrease in tension
- Improved sleep
- Reduction of anxiety
- Management of pain
- Distraction and a positive focus

Physiologic effects include:

- Decrease in pulse rate
- Increase in oxygen consumption
- Increase in carbon dioxide elimination
- Decrease in blood pressure, metabolic rate and muscle tension
- No unpleasant side effects

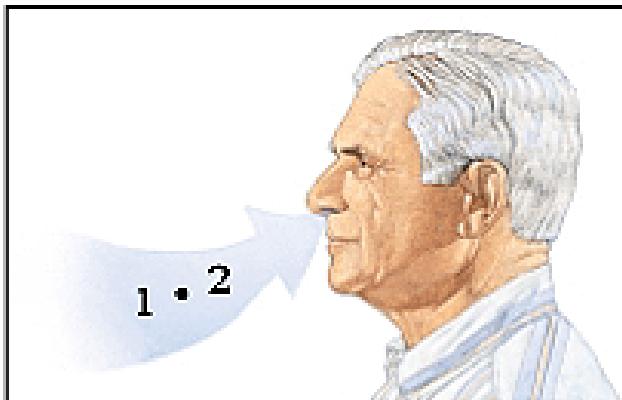


The more you use it the more effective it will be.

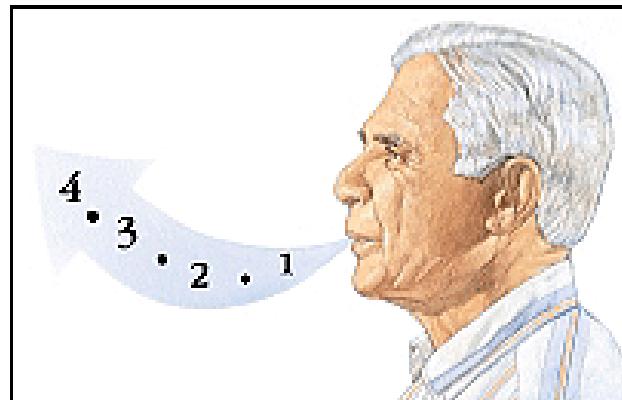
Practice makes permanent.

Technique 1: Diaphragmatic Breathing

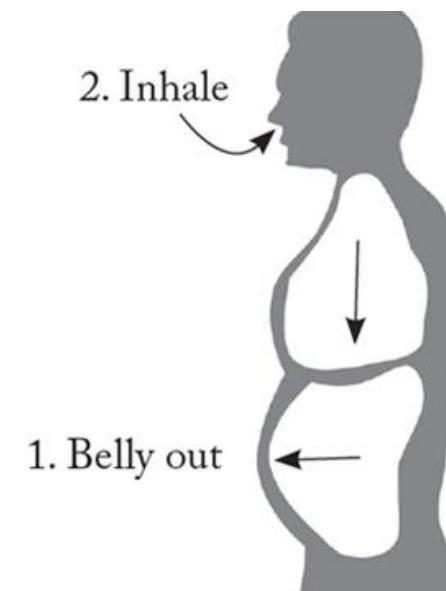
Start with 3 breaths 5 times a day (3x breaths/5x daily)



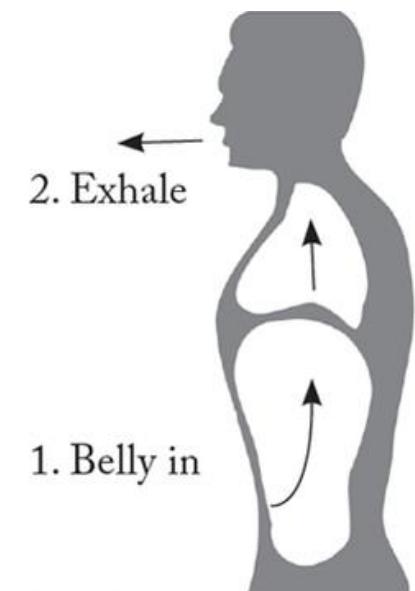
Inhale: Relax your neck and shoulder muscles. Inhale slowly through your nose for 2 counts.



Exhale: Pucker your lips as if you are going to blow out a candle. Exhale slowly and gently through your lips for 4 or more counts.



2. Inhale



2. Exhale