Regulation Isn't Always About Calming Down

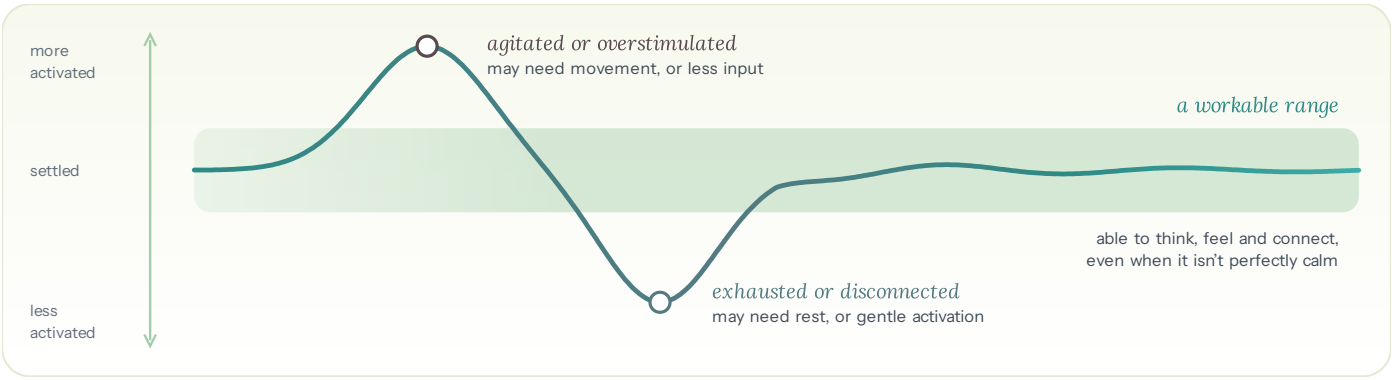
MATCHING WHAT YOU DO TO WHAT YOU NEED

Sometimes the helpful response isn't "calm down".

Calming strategies are useful, but they are only one tool. Different states call for different responses, and pushing yourself towards "calm" can backfire when your body and mind actually need something else.

01 A workable range, not a single calm point

energy naturally rises and falls



02 Match the response to the need

not all needs are about calming

IF I'M FEELING	I MAY NEED
agitated — restless, keyed up, can't sit still	**movement** — walk, stretch, shake out tension, take the stairs
exhausted — heavy, depleted, running on empty	**rest** — lie down, pause, sleep, lower demands for now
disconnected — flat, numb, foggy or far away	**gentle activation** — stand up, splash cool water, music, name what you see
overstimulated — too loud, too bright, too much	**reduced sensory input** — quieter space, dim lights, headphones, step away
lonely — cut off, unseen, on your own	**safe connection** — message someone, time with a pet, be near others

The goal isn't to feel calm all the time. It's to become better able to notice what your system needs, and respond in a way that fits.

Notice what's happening · name what you might need · try a response that fits

03 About "resetting your nervous system"

a more realistic picture

THE POPULAR IDEA

A quick technique can "reset" your nervous system, and the aim is to stay calm and regulated all the time.

Feeling activated, tired or flat means something is wrong with you.

A MORE HELPFUL VIEW

Our states shift throughout the day, and that is normal. No single technique suits every person or every moment.

Research on regulatory flexibility suggests that noticing the situation, choosing a response that fits, and adjusting if it doesn't help may matter more than any one strategy (Aldao et al., 2015; Bonanno & Burton, 2013).

04 A quick check-in

try it once today

Right now, I notice...	What I might need is...	One small thing I could try...

SOURCES

Aldao, A., Sheppes, G., & Gross, J. J. (2015). Emotion regulation flexibility. *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 39*(3), 263–278.

Bonanno, G. A., & Burton, C. L. (2013). Regulatory flexibility: An individual differences perspective on coping and emotion regulation. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 8*(6), 591–612.

Siegel, D. J. (1999). *The developing mind: Toward a neurobiology of interpersonal experience.* Guilford Press.

The "workable range" draws on the idea of a window of tolerance (Siegel, 1999). This is an educational resource, not a treatment protocol.

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