



WORKBOOK

Befriending Your Nervous System

A COMPASSIONATE JOURNAL
FOR CONNECTION AND HEALING

carriedavidson.com/coaching

Important *Note*

This journal is designed as a self-exploration tool to help you develop awareness and understanding of your nervous system responses. It is intended for educational and personal growth purposes only.

THIS JOURNAL IS NOT:

- ⊗ A substitute for professional medical or mental health treatment
- ⊗ A diagnostic tool for any medical or psychological condition
- ⊗ Intended to treat, cure, or prevent any illness or disorder
- ⊗ A replacement for therapy, medication, or professional care

PLEASE SEEK PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT IF YOU EXPERIENCE:

- ⓘ Thoughts of self-harm or suicide
- ⓘ Severe anxiety, depression, or other mental health symptoms
- ⓘ Trauma responses that interfere with daily functioning
- ⓘ Medical symptoms or concerns about your physical health
- ⓘ Any overwhelming distress while using this journal

USE THIS JOURNAL WITH CARE:

- ☑ Go at your own pace - there's no rush
- ☑ Skip any exercises that don't feel right for you
- ☑ Stop if you feel overwhelmed and return when you're ready
- ☑ Consider working through this journal with a therapist or counselor
- ☑ Remember that healing happens in relationship and community

If you're currently working with a mental health professional, consider sharing this journal with them. They may be able to help you use it in a way that best supports your healing journey.

By using this journal, you acknowledge that you are responsible for your own wellbeing and will seek appropriate professional help when needed.



Welcome, *Dear Friend*

This journal is an invitation to develop a loving relationship with your nervous system - that wise, ancient part of you that has been keeping you safe since before you were born. Your nervous system isn't broken or wrong; it's doing exactly what it learned to do to protect you. Now, we'll learn to listen to its wisdom and gently guide it toward more ease.

Remember: There's no wrong way to use this journal. Your nervous system will guide the pace.

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Meeting Your *Nervous System*

UNDERSTANDING YOUR INNER GUARDIAN

Your autonomic nervous system is like a loyal guardian, constantly scanning for safety and danger, working behind the scenes to keep you alive and protected. It has three main states:

Ventral Vagal (Safe and Social) When you're here, you feel calm, curious, and connected. Your body feels relaxed but energized. You can play, create, and connect with others. This is your "home base" - though it's normal not to be here all the time.

What this might feel like:

Breathing is easy and natural

Face feels soft and expressive

Can make eye contact comfortably

Digestion works well

Can think clearly and creatively

Sympathetic (Mobilized) This is your action state - fight or flight. Your body prepares to deal with threat through movement and action. This isn't bad; sometimes we need this energy to meet life's challenges.

What this might feel like:

Heart racing

Muscles tensed for action

Breathing shallow and quick

Heightened alertness

Urge to move, fix, or escape

Dorsal Vagal (Protective Shutdown) When things feel too overwhelming, your nervous system pulls you into conservation mode. Like a turtle retreating into its shell, this is ultimate protection through withdrawal.

What this might feel like:

Numbness or disconnection

Extreme fatigue

Difficulty thinking or speaking

Feeling "not really here"

Time seems to slow or stop

Your Nervous System *Story*

Take a moment to honor your nervous system's journey:

My nervous system has protected me through:

When I was young, safety felt like:

My nervous system learned to be watchful for:

I want to thank my nervous system for:

Daily Practice Pages

Morning Check-In

DATE:

Where am I on the ladder this morning?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ventral Vagal (calm and connected) | <input type="checkbox"/> Sympathetic (activated/anxious) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dorsal Vagal (withdrawn/numb) | <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed/Moving between states |

Body Scan - What do I notice?

Head and Face:

Throat and Neck:

Shoulders and Arms:

Chest and Heart:

Belly:

Hips and Lower Body:

Overall Energy Level (1-10)

What does my nervous system need right now?

- | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Movement | <input type="checkbox"/> Connection | <input type="checkbox"/> Warmth | <input type="checkbox"/> Nourishment | <input type="checkbox"/> Play |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stillness | <input type="checkbox"/> Solitude | <input type="checkbox"/> Cooling | <input type="checkbox"/> Rest | <input type="checkbox"/> Creative Expression |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nature | <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure yet | | | |

Intention for today:

.....

.....

Evening Reflection

DATE:

My nervous system journey today:

I noticed I shifted into sympathetic when:

.....

I noticed I shifted into dorsal vagal when:

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I felt most regulated and calm when:

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Glimmers from today (tiny moments of goodness):

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Tomorrow, I can support my nervous system by:

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Nervous System *Mapping*

My Triggers and Glimmers *Map*

DATE:

Things that typically shift me into SYMPATHETIC (Fight/Flight):

Environmental:

People/Relationships:

Thoughts/Worries:

Physical Sensation:

Times of Day:

Things that bring me to DORSAL VAGAL (Shutdown):

Environmental:

People/Relationships:

Activities:

Physical Sensation:

Times of Day:

Things that bring me to VENTRAL VAGAL (Safe and Social):

Environmental:

People/Relationships:

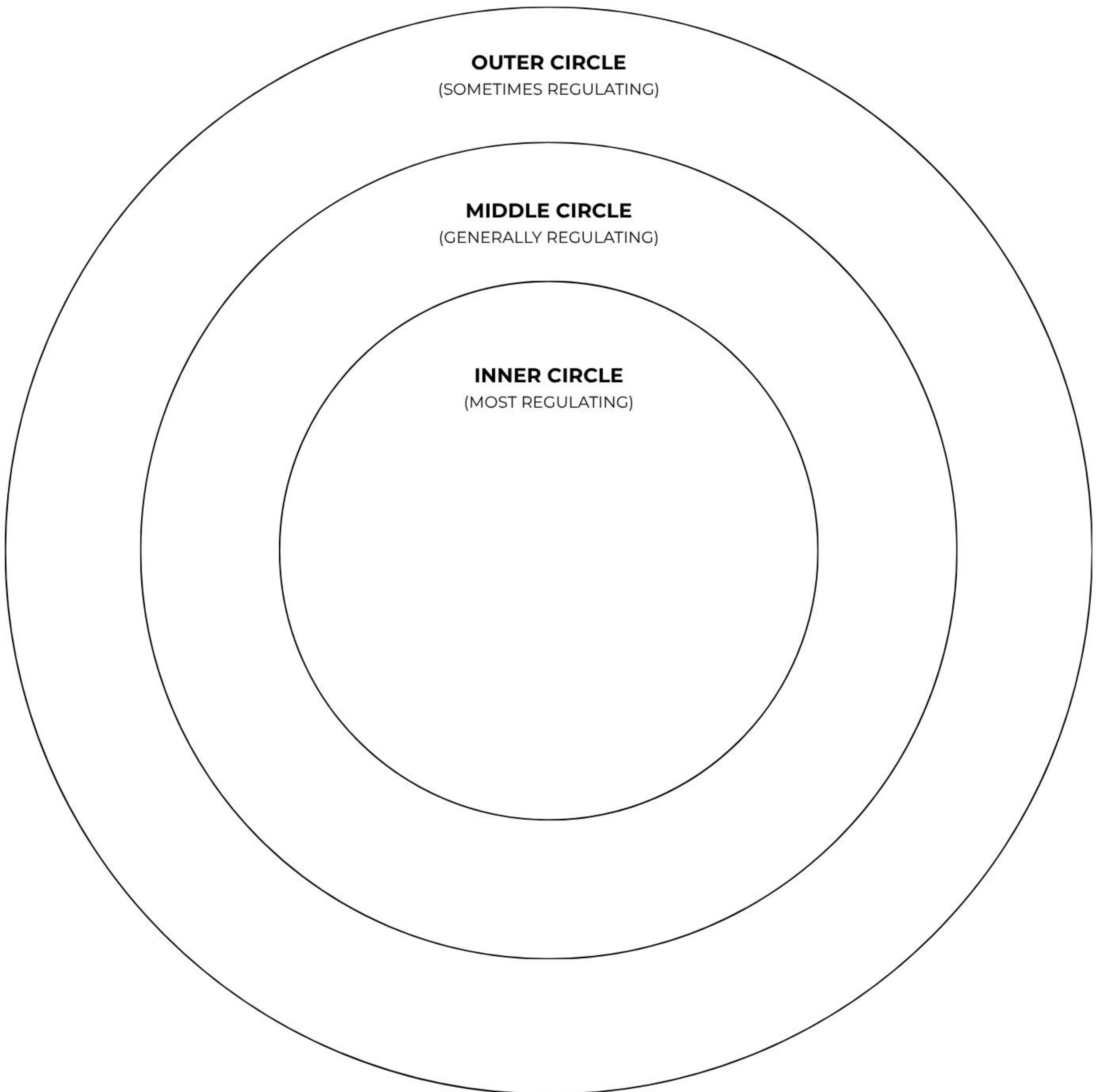
Activities:

Sensory Inputs:

Rituals/Routines:

My Co-Regulation *Circle*

List the people, animals, and spaces that help your nervous system feel safe:



Somatic Practices *Toolkit*

Breathing Practices

For Moving from Sympathetic to Ventral Vagal:

Extended Exhale Breathing

- Inhale for 4 counts
- Hold for 4 counts
- Exhale for 8 counts
- Repeat 4-8 times

How this felt:

For Moving from Dorsal Vagal to Ventral Vagal:

Gentle Awakening Breath

- Take 3 normal breaths, noticing the temperature of the air
- Gradually deepen each inhale
- Add a soft sigh on the exhale
- Continue until you feel more present

How this felt:

Movement Practices

For Discharging Sympathetic Energy:

- Shake your whole body for 30 seconds
- Push against a wall with full strength
- Dance to one energetic song
- Walk briskly while swinging arms

What worked best:

For Emerging from Dorsal Vagal:

- Gentle stretching
- Slowly roll shoulders
- Rock side to side
- Pat or rub your arms and legs

What worked best:

Sensory Resources

TOUCH

- Soft blanket
- Warm bath
- Cold water on face
- Holding a smooth stone
- Self-hug

My favorites:

SOUND

- Humming
- Singing
- Nature sounds
- Bilateral music
- Silence

My favorites:

SIGHT

- Looking at distant horizon
- Watching clouds
- Candle gazing
- Photos of loved ones
- Art that soothes

My favorites:

Weekly Nervous System *Review*

WEEK OF:

This week's nervous system patterns:

I spent most time in which state:

My biggest trigger was:

My most powerful resource was:

I'm getting better at noticing when:

Body wisdom from this week:

My body told me "no" to:

My body told me "yes" to:

I'm learning to trust my body when:

Celebrations (Ways I supported my nervous system):

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Gentle intentions for next week:

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Glimmer Collection

Glimmer Treasury

A glimmer is a micro-moment of ventral vagal energy - a tiny cue of safety, joy, or connection.

DATE: Glimmer:

What I noticed in my body:

DATE: Glimmer:

What I noticed in my body:

DATE: Glimmer:

What I noticed in my body:

DATE: Glimmer:

What I noticed in my body:

DATE: Glimmer:

What I noticed in my body:

DATE: Glimmer:

What I noticed in my body:

Glimmer Patterns

I tend to find glimmers in:

- Morning / Afternoon / Evening
- Inside / Outside
- Planned / Spontaneous
- Alone / With others
- Still / Moving

Nervous System *Dialogues*

Conversation with *Your Sympathetic State*

Dear Sympathetic State,

Thank you for:

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I understand you activate when:

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What you're trying to protect me from:

.....

What you need me to know:

.....

How I can work with you better:

.....

Conversation with *Your Dorsal Vagal State*

Dear Dorsal Vagal State,

Thank you for:

.....

I understand you activate when:

.....

What you're trying to protect me from:

What you need me to know:

How I can honor your wisdom:

Letter from *Your Ventral Vagal State*

Dear Self,

When you're with me in ventral vagal, you are:

You can always return to me by:

Remember that you have survived every activation and shutdown. I'm always here, waiting underneath, ready to welcome you home.

Integration *Practices*

Creating Your *Nervous System Ritual*

Morning Regulation Ritual (5 minutes):

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Midday Reset Ritual (2 minutes):

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Evening Settling Ritual (10 minutes):

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Your Nervous System *First Aid Kit*

When I'm in Sympathetic Activation, I will:

First:

Then:

Finally:

Who I can reach out to:

When I'm in Dorsal Vagal Shutdown, I will:

First:

Then:

Finally:

Who I can reach out to:

Window of Tolerance Tracker

Your window of tolerance is the zone where you can handle stress without going into fight/flight or shutdown

This week, my window of tolerance:

- Felt wider than usual Felt about normal Felt narrower than usual

What helped widen my window:

What narrowed my window:

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Seasonal Nervous System *Check-In*

Quarterly *Review*

SEASON:

How has my nervous system changed this season?

New patterns I've noticed:

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Old patterns that are shifting:

.....

Resources that are working well:

.....

Resources I want to explore:

.....

My nervous system resilience score (1-10):

Three months ago: Now:

What contributed to this change:

.....

Letter of appreciation to my nervous system:

.....

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Ongoing Practice *Prompts*

When You Need *Gentle Guidance*

For Overwhelming Days:

- What would 10% less effort look like?
- Where can I add a pause?
- What would comfort look like right now?

For Numb Days:

- What's one tiny thing I can feel?
- Can I find one spark of curiosity?
- What would gentle awakening look like?

For Anxious Days:

- Where can I discharge this energy?
- What would "good enough" look like?
- How can I be my own friend right now?

Nervous System *Wisdom Prompts*

Complete these whenever you need guidance:

Right now, my body is telling me:

.....

If my nervous system could speak, it would say:

.....

The safest I've felt recently was when:

.....

My nervous system is teaching me that:

.....

I'm beginning to trust that:

.....



Closing Blessing

Dear friend, as you continue this journey of befriending your nervous system, remember:

Your nervous system is not broken. It's been doing its best to keep you safe with the information it had at the time. Every response - every moment of fight, flight, or freeze - has been your body's wisdom trying to protect you.

As you practice noticing, naming, and nurturing your nervous system states, you're not trying to stay in ventral vagal all the time. You're learning to move through states with more awareness, compassion, and choice. You're building flexibility and resilience.

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