

# Restoring Balance

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Many of us are dealing with constant pressures to mend relationships, make money, take care of loved ones, fulfill responsibilities, work through abuse, or are in an abusive environment. We have forgotten how to slow down and take care of ourselves before we take care of others. Our nervous system contains both the somatic (conscious response) and autonomic (unconscious response) functions. There are two branches within the *autonomic* (unconscious response) nervous system; the sympathetic and the parasympathetic.

- **Sympathetic nervous system (fight or flight, emergency responses):**

Located in the spinal cord between the thoracic and lumbar regions, the sympathetic system innervates the digestive organs, reproductive organs, and eliminating channels. This sympathetic system is all about fight or flight, responding to stress, constricting vessels, etc. The solar plexus can be identified with this function.

- **Parasympathetic nervous system (rest and digest, day to day functions):**

Located in the brainstem and sacral regions, this system is the reverse of the fight or flight responses, relaxing the body. The parasympathetic system innervates the organs of the digestive system, reproductive organs, and eliminating channels.

The vagus nerve and aspects of the brainstem can be associated with this function.

Spending too much time in a fight or flight or emergency response with the sympathetic system can make digestion and elimination problematic, sleep difficult, intimacy strained, nerves frayed, feelings on edge, and feelings of exhaustion.

Tips to create balance between the parasympathetic system and sympathetic systems:

1. First, slow down. Create an environment where we can allow our bodies to relax.
2. Avoid harmful methods of depressing the nervous system; alcohol and drugs.
3. Find a safe person or professional that you can talk out your feelings.
4. Follow a nutrient dense plant-based diet, cut out processed foods, and animal products.

Support the sodium potassium pump in your body. It helps generate nerve response.

- Natural sources of **sodium**; celery, beets, carrots, spinach, swiss chard, etc.
- Natural sources of **potassium**; spinach, bananas, avocados, sweet potatoes, beets, coconut water, swiss chard, black strap molasses, red bell pepper, etc.

5. Use nervine herbs so the body can restore balance. If our nerves are frayed or firing too much, it will calm them. If they aren't firing enough, it will help them respond to the needs of the body. Dr. Christopher believed in safe, non-toxic, non-habit forming herbs. Here is a list of some nerve herbs he endorsed:

- Valerian: calms and eases anxiety and insomnia (my personal favorite).
- Lemon Balm: soothes herpes sores, settles and relaxes stomach and nerves.
- Wood Betony: relieves head and face pain, digestive tension, dizziness, etc.
- Skullcap: reduces nervousness, anxiety, insomnia, relieves menstrual cramps.
- Hops: nervous conditions, sleeplessness, tremors, etc.

We cannot rest and digest if we are in a state of emergency. Let's find time to slow down, feed our body and soul what it needs, and enjoy life more fully. From the lyrics of a beautiful song, "In the time of tribulation, when I'm feeling so unsure. When things are pressing in about me, comes a gentle voice so still, so pure, slow down, slow down, be still."

References:

1. Hobbs, Christopher, and Leslie Gardner. *Grow It Heal It*. 1st ed., Rodale, 2013.

2. Christopher, John R. *School of Natural Healing*. Christopher Publications, 2014.
3. "Slow Down - Sissel (2019 Pioneer Concert with The Tabernacle Choir)". *YouTube*, 2020, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EFfe84U\\_kt8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EFfe84U_kt8).

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