



## Signaling Safety - activity -

Prepared by Madelanne Rust-D'Eye

**People:** Between 1-12.

**Time:** 1 hour total. 10 minutes to read this guide. 35 minutes to try the Activities. 15 minutes for discussion afterwards.

**Resources:** A clear space or a room where the group can move around comfortably. One person can read the Activities aloud while the group tries them.

### How Can This Help Us?

Because many of the signals in modern environments (like loud noises or stressful conditions) and group cultures (like unspoken tension or emotional charge) can be interpreted as 'danger' signals by the nervous system, signaling safety can calm the nervous system and restore it to a balanced baseline of Social Engagement. These Activities send 'safety' signals directly to the nervous system. They are designed to calm the body, and to allow more blood to flow to the brain.

## The Activities

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### Grounding

Take a few minutes to notice all the places your body is in contact with the surface beneath it - a chair, the floor, the ground. Allow your breath to deepen into these places. Imagine both your body, and whatever's beneath it, softening a little bit. Take your time to feel into each centimeter of contact.

### Orienting

It is very comforting to the nervous system when the body is well-oriented in space. Take some time to slowly look around the space you are in. Notice details, such as colours, textures, light, shapes. Notice where there are entrances, exits, large objects, or other people. Really take your time. First try doing this alone, maybe moving closer to examine some things more fully. If you can, try doing this with a partner, describing what you see out loud to them. Try to name every detail in the space.

## Pushing

Creating pressure in the joints sends information to the nervous system about the position of the body in space. Push with your hands against a firm surface, like a wall or floor, a stone or tree. At the same time, try pushing into the ground with your feet. Notice the feeling of pressure in your joints: wrists, elbows, and shoulders; ankles, knees, and hips. Notice if you want to increase or decrease the pressure, and adjust your pushing accordingly.

## Shake-Out

During periods of minor nervous system activation, the body can be calmed by gently shaking or wiggling the fingers, hands, or toes. Try some gentle shaking now. During strong or intense nervous system activation, energy may arise in the body, so that it wants to move. After Orienting and Pushing, it can be helpful to take several minutes for a full-body shake-out. Try shaking your arms, legs, shoulders, hips, and head. Start gently, and allow a bit more vigor if it feels good.

## Lengthen the Exhale

Make your exhale longer than your inhale. Try counting to 4 for the inhale and counting to 6 for the exhale, or whatever count feels right for you. Repeat for 3 - 5 minutes. You might even try making a “Vooo” sound as you exhale, to increase vibration and help your body relax even more.

## Movement

Gentle movements can help to metabolise stress hormones and bring the nervous system back towards Social Engagement; whereas vigorous or intensive exercise can activate the nervous system. Try a series of gentle movements followed by a period of resting. For example, stretching, yawning, walking, bouncing, flopping, or dangling. Then pause. And move again.



### Related resources

### References

[www.BodyInformedLeadership.org](http://www.BodyInformedLeadership.org)

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