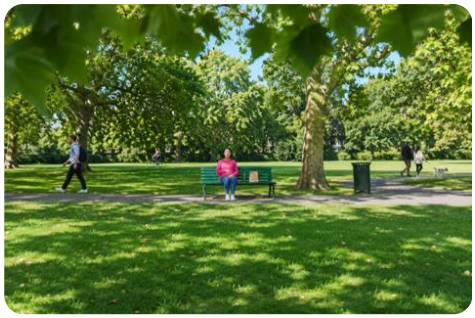
NEWS LESSON

Do You Need to Reset Your Nervous System?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What do you do when you feel stressed and want to calm down?
2. Have you ever tried a breathing exercise? What happened?
3. Where do you find health tips: from friends, from videos or from a doctor?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**reset**	☐	A	a way that something works
2	**promise**	☐	B	the way you feel at a particular time
3	**mode**	☐	C	taking air in and out of your body
4	**wired**	☐	D	full of energy and unable to relax
5	**mood**	☐	E	quick jumps into very cold water
6	**support**	☐	F	proof or help that shows an idea is good
7	**plunges**	☐	G	to say that something will definitely happen
8	**breathing**	☐	H	to set something back to how it was at the start

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Videos online promise a quick reset for your nervous system. Experts say that is not how the body works, but some simple habits can help you calm down.

1 Videos online promise to "reset" your nervous system. They tell you to tap your hand, hum, take cold plunges or stand on a shaking plate. In October 2026, The Guardian asked experts whether any of this is true.

2 The experts agreed on one thing. There is no such thing as a nervous system reset, and you would not want one. One part of your nervous system controls things you do not think about, such as your heart rate and digestion. It has two main modes. The "fight or flight" mode gets you ready for action. The "rest and digest" mode slows down your heart and helps you recover.

3 Stress switches on the first mode, whether it is an urgent email or bad news. Your heart beats faster and you feel more alert. That is useful, because you need it to exercise and concentrate. The problem starts when you cannot calm down afterwards. Then you can feel "wired and tired", and experts say this may add to other health problems over time. A healthy system is not always calm. It changes when it needs to, and then recovers.

4 So the experts talk about flexibility, not resets. Dr Serena Lai, a psychiatrist in London, explains that slow breathing, about six times a minute, can quickly change your heart rate variability, which is the small change in the time between heartbeats. She suggests breathing in for about five seconds and out for about five, for five to ten minutes. In one study, a breathing exercise called cyclic sighing, practised for five minutes a day, improved people's mood over a month.

5 Other habits have support too. Regular exercise can help your system work better over time, but too much training without rest can have the opposite effect. Regular sleep times and time away from screens also help. Cold water is less clear. One expert says there is not enough good evidence that it gives real benefits for the nervous system. If you enjoy it, that is fine.

6 So, can you reset in five minutes? Not really, and there is no quick fix. But a few minutes of slow breathing may change some short-term measurements, and simple habits help your body recover. Try to keep your cool, and take big online promises with a pinch of salt. If you feel anxious or tired all the time, talk to a doctor.

Sources: The Guardian, Feeling wired? The truth about 'nervous system resets'; Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews, Effects of voluntary slow breathing on heart rate and heart rate variability: A systematic review and a meta-analysis. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The experts say that you would not want a nervous system reset. T F NG
2. Dr Lai suggests slow breathing for only about one minute. T F NG
3. One expert says there is not enough good evidence for the benefits of cold water. T F NG
4. The text says that the stress response is never useful. T F NG
5. The text says how many people took part in the cyclic sighing study. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

anxious **concentrate** **digestion** **habits** **relaxed** **reliable** **urgent**

1. Please reply today. This matter is _____ and cannot wait.
2. Before an exam, many students feel _____ and cannot sleep.
3. It is hard to _____ on your homework when your phone keeps buzzing.
4. Going to bed early and eating breakfast are healthy _____ .
5. Your _____ is the way your body breaks down the food you eat.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. In October 2026, The Guardian _____ experts whether any of this is true. (ASK)
2. When you are stressed, your heart _____ faster. (BEAT)
3. Dr Lai _____ breathing in for about five seconds. (SUGGEST)
4. In one study, the breathing exercise _____ people's mood over a month. (IMPROVE)
5. The "rest and digest" mode _____ down your heart. (SLOW)

7 Language focus: prepositions

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Some words always take the same small word after them. Learn the pair together, not the small word alone.

at	for	from	in	of	on	to

1. It can take a few minutes to recover _____ a stressful day.
2. How much sleep you need depends _____ your age.
3. If you feel low for a long time, talk _____ a doctor.
4. Many people are interested _____ new ways to relax.
5. Some people are afraid _____ very cold water.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. Which of the habits in the text would be easiest for you to try?
2. Why do you think quick fixes are so popular online?
3. How can you tell when a health tip online is a good one?

9 Role-play: is the mat worth it?

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the flatmate who wants to buy

You saw a video about a spiky mat that promises to calm you down. It costs a lot. Explain why you want it and try to persuade your flatmate to share the cost.

Student B · the flatmate who is unsure

You are not sure the mat is worth the money. Ask about the evidence, suggest a cheaper idea and try to agree on a plan you are both happy with.

Useful phrases

I saw a video that says it works in five minutes.
That's a lot of money for a mat.
What's the evidence?
I'd rather try something free first.
Let's wait a week and then decide.
I'm not convinced, but I'm happy to try.

Afterwards, tell the class: did you buy the mat, and why?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 H · 2 G · 3 A · 4 D · 5 B · 6 F · 7 E · 8 C

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 T · 4 F · 5 NG

5 Vocabulary

1 urgent · 2 anxious · 3 concentrate · 4 habits · 5 digestion

6 Verb forms

1 asked · 2 beats · 3 suggests · 4 improved · 5 slows

7 Language focus

1 from · 2 on · 3 to · 4 in · 5 of

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