

NeuroEmotional Reset™

Why You React the Way You
Do—and How to Change It

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by

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Chapter 1

Why You React the Way You Do

And why it's probably not for the reason you think

Let's start with something simple.

You're in the kitchen. Someone you love walks in and says something small—something almost meaningless.

Maybe it's: "You spent how much on that?"

Or: "Did you forget to call them back again?"

Or maybe they say nothing at all. Just that look.

And suddenly—something in you *flares*.

You feel heat in your chest. Tightness in your throat. Or an eerie kind of shut-down, like you've been pulled underwater.

You want to scream. Or disappear. Or fix it. Fast.

The reaction is *instant*.

And here's the important part: it feels bigger than the moment.

Because it is.

The Myth of Overreaction

People often say things like:

"I know I overreacted..."

"I should just calm down..."

"I don't know why that got to me so much..."

But what if it wasn't an *overreaction* at all?

What if it was a *patterned protection response*—a deeply intelligent reflex from your nervous system?

Your body isn't trying to embarrass you. It's trying to *protect* you.

And often, it's working from data stored long before this moment ever happened.

Your Brain Reacts Before You Do

One of the most surprising facts about your emotional life is this:

You don't react to what's happening.

You react to what your *nervous system predicts* is about to happen.

Your brain is a **prediction machine**.

It takes past experiences, current body cues, and subtle signals from the outside world—and decides what kind of threat (if any) might be approaching.

This prediction happens in a split second, long before your thinking brain gets a vote.

That's why someone can say something completely ordinary—and your heart still races.

It's not about the words.

It's about the history your body has with those words, that tone, that posture.

Fun Fact: The Amygdala Reacts in 12 Milliseconds

Your **amygdala**—the almond-shaped alarm system in your brain—can react to perceived threat in **12 milliseconds**.

That's faster than you can blink.

Faster than you can form a thought.

By the time you're saying, "*I don't know what came over me,*"—it already did.

Reaction Is Not a Choice—It's a Loop

Here's the basic loop of emotional reactivity:

1. **Your nervous system detects a signal** (tone, expression, word)
2. It searches your memory: *"Have we felt unsafe here before?"*
3. If the answer is yes, it activates a **protective response** (fight, flight, freeze, fawn)
4. Then your conscious mind rushes in to **justify** what already happened

The trouble is, the story your mind tells isn't always the truth.

You may convince yourself you're mad about the dishes, the phone call, the schedule.

But beneath it all is something much older.

The body remembers what the mind forgets.

Especially when it comes to feeling ignored, unprotected, or unseen.

The Emotional Echo

Let's call this phenomenon the **emotional echo**.

It's the invisible vibration of past pain hiding inside present tension.

That argument about the bank account isn't just about money.

It's about what money *meant* in your household growing up.

It's about fear of losing control. Of not being provided for. Of becoming your parents.

The same goes for jealousy. It's not always about distrust—it's often about **abandonment memory** stored in the nervous system. You don't just fear losing the person. You fear becoming the version of yourself who wasn't chosen.

These echoes create reaction patterns that feel irrational—but are actually quite precise.

They're your nervous system's way of saying:

"I've been here before. And last time, it hurt."

Story: The Coffee Cup That Ended Everything

A client once told me that the end of her five-year relationship began with a coffee cup.

Her partner walked in, sighed, and said, “*You didn’t rinse this?*”

That’s all it took. Her body went cold. She left the room.

Two days later, she ended things.

Why?

Because her nervous system *didn’t hear* “You didn’t rinse this.”

It heard:

“You’re too much.”

“You’re always in the way.”

“You can’t do anything right.”

That wasn’t about the coffee cup.

It was about the **entire childhood** where she was criticized for existing.

Her partner didn’t know that sentence would trigger a shutdown response.

She didn’t either—until her body spoke first.

And in that moment, it wasn’t logic that led the way.

It was survival.

So... Can You Change It?

Yes. And that’s the whole point of this book.

You *can’t* change your reaction by forcing your body to be different.

But you *can* retrain your body to *feel* safer.

You can begin to recognize your patterns.

You can slow the loop.

You can become the observer of your nervous system—not just the passenger.

You can learn to **reset**.

That doesn't mean you'll never react again. It means your reaction won't own you.

The Reset Starts with Curiosity

Instead of shaming yourself when you react, ask:

- What is my body trying to protect me from?
- Have I felt this before?
- What was I expecting that didn't happen—or fearing that did?

These are not soft questions. They are survival codes.

Your nervous system isn't irrational. It's just fast.

Faster than logic.

Faster than memory.

But not faster than love, if you learn to pause.

In the Next Chapter...

We'll explore the hidden language of your nervous system—and why it reacts even when your mind feels “fine.”

Because the reset doesn't begin in your thoughts.

It begins in your body.

Chapter 2

Your Body Remembers What You Don't

Why your nervous system reacts even when your mind feels "fine"

There's a strange kind of confusion that happens in the aftermath of an emotional reaction.

You calm down. You reflect. You try to be reasonable.

And then you hear yourself say something like:

"I don't know why I got so upset."

"I was overreacting—it wasn't that big of a deal."

"Everything was fine... until it wasn't."

What most people don't realize is this:

When your nervous system gets triggered, your *thinking brain isn't in charge anymore*.

In fact, your body often **remembers experiences your conscious mind never fully processed**. This isn't metaphor. It's memory science.

The Body Has a Brain of Its Own

You've probably heard the phrase: "*The body keeps the score*."

It's not just a book title—it's a literal truth.

Your body stores emotional experiences not just as memories, but as **sensorimotor imprints**—meaning, your nervous system encodes experiences in muscle tension, breath patterns, and gut responses long before they become conscious stories.

This system is known as **implicit memory**.

Unlike explicit memory (facts, events, conversations), implicit memory doesn't use words or pictures. It lives in **felt sensation**—tight shoulders, a clenched jaw, a pit in the stomach.

It's the kind of memory that doesn't say, "*I remember what happened,*" but rather, "*This feels familiar—and not in a good way.*"

Fun Fact: Your Heart Remembers Before Your Head Does

Research has shown that the heart rate and sweat glands can react to emotionally charged stimuli **before the brain becomes consciously aware of them.**

In one study, participants were shown a mix of neutral and emotionally charged images. Even when the emotional images were flashed too quickly for conscious recognition, their bodies **still reacted** with measurable shifts in physiology.

In other words:

Your body can “know” you’re unsafe before your mind does.

This explains why you can have a sudden emotional reaction in a situation that *seems* harmless—because your body is responding to **what it associates** with past harm, not just what it sees now.

Triggers Aren't Always About What's Happening—They're About What's *Unfinished*

Let's say someone raises their voice during an argument.

It's not just the volume that makes your body tense up—it's everything you've ever associated with raised voices.

Maybe you grew up in a house where yelling was followed by punishment.
Or silence. Or abandonment.

So when that voice rises, your nervous system says:

“Here we go again. Brace yourself.”

It doesn't care that you're 35 now.

It doesn't care that this is a different person, a different place, a different outcome.

It only cares about one thing: **Are we safe or not?**

That's the intelligence of your body. It is **fiercely loyal to survival**.

The Science of Threat Perception

Your brain has a special system called the **limbic system**—a network of structures including the amygdala, hippocampus, and hypothalamus—that **scans for threat 24/7**.

When it senses a match between what's happening now and something painful from the past, it activates your **autonomic nervous system**. This kicks you into:

- **Fight** (defensiveness, anger, control)
- **Flight** (anxiety, avoidance, restlessness)
- **Freeze** (numbness, disconnection)
- **Fawn** (appeasement, over-pleasing, self-abandonment)

None of these are chosen.

They are **reflexes designed to protect you**.

Story: The Boy Who Couldn't Speak Up

At age 7, Julian was sent to the principal's office after telling a classmate to stop pushing him.

He was labeled "disruptive." His parents scolded him for "talking back."

After that, he learned it was safer to stay silent than to advocate for himself.

Now he's 40.

He's in therapy because he shuts down every time his partner tries to talk about boundaries or emotions.

He says things like:

“I don’t know why I freeze. I love her. I just... go blank.”

His nervous system isn’t being difficult. It’s being **loyal to an old rule**:

“Speaking up gets you in trouble. Stay quiet. Stay safe.”

Until that story is updated—**in the body, not just the mind**—the shutdown will keep happening.

So What Do You Do About It?

If your body remembers what your mind has forgotten, then healing has to include the body, too.

This is the heart of **emotional regulation**—not controlling your feelings, but understanding their origin and meeting them with safety.

That means:

- Learning to *feel* sensations without rushing to fix them
- Listening for the **emotional echo** beneath your reactions
- Practicing **co-regulation** with safe others who don’t reinforce old patterns
- Sending new signals to your body that say:
“This moment is different. We don’t need to run anymore.”

Reset Practice: The Pause + the Pattern

The next time you notice a big reaction and think,

“Why am I like this?”

Pause.

Then ask yourself:

- “What does this feel like in my body?”
- “When have I felt this before—even if I can’t remember the details?”
- “What did I need then that I didn’t get?”
- “What do I need *now* that I can actually give myself?”

You don’t need perfect recall.

You just need presence.

Neuroplasticity Is the Good News

Here’s what most people don’t know:

Your brain can **rewire emotional memory**.

This process is called **memory reconsolidation**. It happens when:

1. An old emotional memory is activated
2. A new, *contradictory experience* of safety is introduced
3. The nervous system updates the “truth”

That’s why talking about trauma isn’t enough.

You have to feel **safe while talking about it**—or it just reactivates the pain.

The body must experience a new ending to the old story.

That’s what resets the loop.

In the Next Chapter...

We’ll explore why your gut feelings are more literal than you think—and how your second brain may be steering more of your life than you realize.

Because sometimes the answers to your emotional life aren’t in your head.

They’re in your **stomach**.

Chapter 3

It's Not in Your Head—It's in Your Gut

How your second brain shapes your mood, your reactions, and your decisions

You've felt it before.

The tightening in your stomach when someone says the wrong thing.

The nausea before a difficult conversation.

The dull ache in your abdomen when grief sits too long.

The butterflies. The knots. The drop.

What we casually call a “gut feeling” is more than intuition.

It's neuroscience.

And your gut is more than just a digestion center—it's a **full-blown nervous system**.

Meet Your Second Brain

There's a bundle of over 100 million neurons lining your digestive tract.

That's more neurons than a cat has in its brain.

Scientists call this the **enteric nervous system**.

It operates semi-independently from your brain and communicates directly with it through a massive information highway known as the **vagus nerve**.

This brain–gut connection forms the **gut-brain axis**—a two-way system through which your emotional state influences digestion, and your digestive health influences mood, clarity, and reactivity.

Fun Fact: 90% of Serotonin Lives in Your Gut

Serotonin, the neurotransmitter most commonly associated with happiness and emotional stability, is often linked to the brain.

But in reality, **over 90% of serotonin is produced in your gut.**

Which means:

Your gut health doesn't just affect digestion—it plays a direct role in how emotionally resilient or reactive you feel.

When Your Gut Feels Unsafe, So Do You

Imagine this: You're walking into a meeting. Everything seems normal. But suddenly, your stomach turns. Your heart rate picks up. You feel...off.

There's no obvious threat in the room.

But your gut is interpreting signals: body language, tone, tension, even environmental cues. And when something doesn't feel right, it sends a signal up the vagus nerve to your brain:

"Something's not safe. Get ready."

And so, your **thoughts change**, your **attention narrows**, and your **emotions shift**—all based on what your gut perceived before your mind had a chance to catch up.

This is why so many people say, *"I knew something was wrong. I just felt it."*

Because they *did* feel it.

In their **enteric nervous system**.

Story: The Dinner Party Panic

A client once described going to a dinner party where nothing "bad" happened—but halfway through, she had to excuse herself to the bathroom, trembling.

No one had raised their voice. There was no conflict.

But her gut had picked up on subtle cues: a sarcastic comment that reminded her of childhood, the loud clatter of utensils, the smell of a dish linked to an old memory.

Her body didn't say: *"I'm overreacting."*

It said: *"I've been here before. We didn't feel safe then. We're leaving now."*

Gut Reactions Are Faster Than Thought

Your gut sends messages to your brain **more frequently** than the brain sends messages to your gut.

In fact, according to researchers, **90% of the vagus nerve traffic goes upward—from the body to the brain.**

This means your emotional responses are often **bottom-up**, not top-down.

You're not deciding to be anxious.

Your gut is telling your brain, *"There's a problem,"* and your brain scrambles to make sense of it.

What Disrupts Gut-Based Emotional Regulation?

Several factors can disturb your gut-brain communication and increase emotional reactivity:

- **Chronic stress** (which inflames gut lining and dysregulates digestion)
- **High sugar or processed diets**
- **Antibiotic overuse** (which depletes gut bacteria)
- **Poor sleep**
- **Trauma and unprocessed emotion** (which often live in the belly)

Emotions don't just "live in the heart."

They **settle in the gut**—especially when they haven't been expressed.

Think of your stomach as a storage vault.

Everything you didn't feel safe enough to say often ends up there.

Reset Practice: Belly Mapping

This short practice reconnects you with your gut's messages:

1. Lie down or sit comfortably with one hand on your chest and one on your belly.
2. Take 3 slow breaths into your **lower abdomen**, not just your chest.
3. Ask: *"What is my gut trying to tell me?"*
4. Notice any image, memory, or phrase that arises. Don't analyze—just observe.
5. Close with the phrase:
"Thank you for protecting me. I'm listening now."

Gut Bacteria and Emotional State

Here's where it gets even more interesting:

Your **microbiome**—the trillions of bacteria in your gut—can influence your risk of depression, anxiety, and even memory function.

Studies have found that transplanting gut bacteria from anxious mice into calm mice **makes the calm mice anxious**—and vice versa.

Your mood isn't just psychological.

It's **biochemical**.

And your gut is the factory.

So when someone says they feel "off" or "low," it's worth considering both their emotional triggers and their digestive health.

The two are **intimately linked**.

Trusting Your Gut Isn't Just a Saying. It's a Skill.

The more regulated your nervous system becomes, the more accurate your gut feelings are.

When you're dysregulated, everything feels like a threat.

But as you heal, your gut becomes **an ally**, not just an alarm system.

Learning to trust your gut doesn't mean obeying every flinch.

It means creating enough internal stillness to hear what your body is saying—and interpret it with compassion and clarity.

In the Next Chapter...

We'll explore what it really means to be “regulated”—and why being calm isn't always the goal.

Because nervous system health isn't about being chill.

It's about being able to come *back* to yourself.

Chapter 4

Regulated Isn't Calm—It's Connected

Why nervous system health isn't about being peaceful all the time

If you think emotional healing is about becoming calm, still, and unbothered—you're not alone.

Most of us grew up with the belief that emotional maturity looks like quiet composure. Like always being "fine."

We admire people who seem unshakable, unfazed, unaffected.

But here's the surprising truth:

True regulation isn't about staying calm. It's about being able to return to connection—especially after rupture.

A healthy nervous system isn't one that never gets upset.

It's one that knows how to come back to **center** after being thrown off.

What Is Regulation, Really?

To be regulated means:

- You can feel anger without exploding
- You can feel sadness without shutting down
- You can disagree without disintegrating
- You can have a hard moment and return to connection—internally or relationally—*without losing your sense of self*

It's about **flexibility**, not stillness.

The Science of Flexibility

In neuroscience, this quality is called “**vagal tone**”—your nervous system’s ability to shift between sympathetic arousal (stress, action) and parasympathetic calm (rest, digest, connect) with ease.

The higher your vagal tone, the faster and more gracefully you can return to regulation after being activated.

That means:

- You don’t stay stuck in spirals
- You don’t need to avoid all conflict
- You don’t fear discomfort, because you *trust your return*

Fun Fact: Regulated People Can Look Chaotic on the Outside

A mother who yells but immediately repairs with her child may be **more regulated** than the father who never raises his voice but lives in constant emotional shutdown.

A partner who cries, expresses anger, and stays present in the conversation is often **more integrated** than the one who walks away every time things get hard.

Because again—**it’s not about staying calm.**

It’s about staying **present.**

Even when things are messy.

Story: The Quiet Partner Who Was Never Really There

A woman once came to therapy saying,

“I don’t understand. My husband never yells. He never argues. He always says I’m overreacting. But I feel completely alone.”

What she was describing wasn’t kindness.

It was **emotional absence**.

His version of regulation was really a survival state: **freeze and fawn**.

He avoided discomfort by emotionally exiting, even while physically staying.

That left her to carry the weight of all the emotional labor—and eventually, the relationship collapsed.

Dysregulation Is a State, Not a Diagnosis

You are not a “dysregulated person.”

You are a **regulated person who sometimes moves through dysregulated states**.

This is normal.

Stressful life events, trauma triggers, relational rupture, or even poor sleep can move you into:

- **Sympathetic activation** (fight or flight): anxiety, anger, urgency
- **Dorsal vagal collapse** (freeze): numbness, disconnection, fatigue
- **Fawn response**: over-pleasing, self-betrayal, hyper-compliance

These are not bad behaviors.

They are nervous system *adaptations*.

But the key is: **do you know how to come back?**

Can you recognize the state you're in, and reset?

That’s regulation.

Signs of a Regulated Nervous System

Here's what real regulation looks and feels like:

- You notice when you're getting escalated
- You can name your emotions before they explode
- You know how to pause before reacting
- You can disagree without needing to dominate or disappear
- You take responsibility *without* taking on blame
- You can be with someone else's discomfort without trying to fix it

Notice: none of these mean “you always feel good.”

They mean you know how to **hold yourself steady** in the waves.

Reset Practice: The Return Ritual

Here's a practice for moments when you feel emotionally hijacked, but want to reset:

1. **Notice:** Say out loud or internally—*“I am dysregulated right now.”*
2. **Name:** Identify the state (fight, flight, freeze, fawn).
3. **Soothe:** Apply a known regulation cue (deep belly breathing, grounding touch, visual anchor, gentle movement).
4. **Reconnect:** Ask yourself—*“What would help me feel just 5% more connected right now?”*
5. **Return:** Once regulated, speak from that place. Even if all you say is:
“I’m here now. I’m back. Let’s try again.”

This small sequence rewires the brain for safety and agency.

Regulation Is Relational, Too

You don't have to regulate alone.

In fact, the human nervous system was built to co-regulate.

Holding someone's hand.

Looking into their eyes.

Hearing a soft, steady voice say:

"You're okay. I've got you. We're in this together."

These are biological interventions—not emotional indulgences.

In therapy, in parenting, in partnership—we need to **borrow safety from each other** until we can feel it on our own.

Your Calm Is Not the Goal—Your Return Is

No one can stay regulated all the time.

But you can become someone who knows how to find the way back.

Again and again.

More quickly.

More kindly.

That's the reset.

Not perfection.

But return.

In the Next Chapter...

We'll explore how honesty—not harmony—is the foundation of real emotional healing. Because you can't regulate what you refuse to admit.

And your nervous system can't lie.

Chapter 5

You Can't Heal If You're Hiding

Why emotional honesty is the first step to regulation

Let's get this out of the way:

You are not too much.

You are not too emotional, too dramatic, or too intense.

But you may have learned to **hide** the truth of your emotional experience to survive.

Most of us did.

We learned which feelings were “allowed” and which ones weren't.

We learned to keep quiet so we wouldn't be punished.

To smile so we wouldn't be abandoned.

To hold it all in—until our body couldn't anymore.

The Body Doesn't Lie

One of the most powerful insights in emotional neuroscience is this:

Your nervous system responds to truth, not words.

You can say “I'm fine” all day long, but if your stomach's in knots, your chest is tight, and your voice is shaky—your body is telling the real story.

Emotions are not optional.

They're **physiological events**.

And suppressing them doesn't make them disappear—it just stores them deeper in the system.

That's why people who seem emotionally “together” sometimes develop panic attacks out of nowhere.

It's not nowhere. It's *unspoken grief* finding an exit.

Story: The Man Who Never Got Angry

A client once told me he hadn't been angry in ten years.

He said it like a badge of honor.

No raised voices. No conflict. No outbursts.

But he couldn't sleep.

He had acid reflux, tight hips, chronic fatigue.

And he would randomly burst into tears during commercials—then quickly apologize.

What he didn't know was that his body was holding a **ten-year archive** of unspoken rage.

Anger he never let surface.

Needs he never claimed.

Pain he learned to minimize so he could be "easy to love."

But there's a cost to hiding.

And eventually, the body sends the bill.

Suppression Isn't Strength—It's Survival

Many people think emotional suppression is a sign of maturity.

But from a neuroscience perspective, it's often a **protective mechanism** born in childhood.

If you learned early on that your big feelings weren't welcome, your nervous system adapted:

- You froze instead of expressing
- You fawned to stay connected
- You dissociated to escape
- You made yourself small to be safe

These adaptations weren't weaknesses.

They were wisdom.

But they're not built for long-term thriving.

At some point, survival strategies become suffocating.

Fun Fact: Emotional Suppression Increases Stress Hormones

A study from the University of Texas found that suppressing emotions (especially during interpersonal conflict) leads to **higher cortisol levels**, increased heart rate, and greater sympathetic nervous system activation.

In simple terms:

Stuffing your feelings stresses out your body.

You may not say what you're feeling, but your **nervous system screams it anyway**—through tension, illness, sleep disruption, and emotional numbness.

Healing Requires Telling the Truth

You don't need to tell everyone everything.

But you *do* need to start telling the truth—at least to yourself.

- The truth about how that conversation landed
- The truth about what you're really afraid of
- The truth about what still hurts, even if it happened years ago

This is not about blaming others.

It's about **reclaiming your emotional reality**.

Because you can't regulate what you pretend doesn't exist.

And you can't reset what you haven't allowed yourself to feel.

Reset Practice: Say One True Thing

The next time you feel overwhelmed, shut down, or disconnected, try this:

1. Find a quiet space.
2. Close your eyes. Place a hand on your chest or belly.
3. Ask yourself:
“What is one thing I’m feeling right now that I haven’t said?”
4. Whisper it out loud. Just once.
It might sound like:
 - “*I’m exhausted from pretending I’m okay.*”
 - “*I feel invisible and I hate it.*”
 - “*I need someone to ask how I really am.*”
5. That’s it. No fixing. Just truth.
6. Take one long breath to honor what was named.

This is how emotional honesty becomes a nervous system intervention.

What Hiding Costs You

When you hide your truth, even from yourself, you create **internal conflict**.

- Your body says: *Something is wrong.*
- Your mind says: *Nothing is wrong.*
- Your relationships say: *You’re hard to understand.*

Over time, this fragmentation leads to:

- Anxiety that doesn't make sense
- Emotional outbursts that feel disproportionate
- A sense of loneliness, even when you're surrounded by people

But when you start telling the truth—especially in safe, regulated moments—your system begins to repair.

Integration becomes possible.

You come home to yourself.

Emotional Honesty Is a Regulating Force

When you tell the truth, your nervous system relaxes.

Even if the truth is painful.

Even if nothing is solved yet.

Why?

Because your body finally gets to **stop hiding**.

And hiding is exhausting.

Healing doesn't begin when the problem is fixed.

It begins when the story becomes *safe enough* to name.

In the Next Chapter...

We'll explore why emotional safety isn't just about your partner's tone or your therapist's words—it's a biological experience your nervous system is always scanning for.

Because before you can open up, your body must believe it's safe to be seen.

Chapter 6

Safety Is a Felt Sense, Not a Fact

Why your nervous system needs more than reassurance to open up

You're sitting across from someone who says all the right things.
They smile. They speak gently. They assure you:

"You're safe with me."

"I'm not like the others."

"You can trust me."

And yet, something in you can't relax.
Your shoulders stay tight. Your chest feels guarded.
You keep scanning for signs.
You don't know why—but you just don't feel right.

That's because safety isn't made with words.
It's made with *signals*.

The Science of Safety

Your nervous system is constantly scanning your environment for cues of threat or connection.
This process is called **neuroception**, a term coined by Dr. Stephen Porges.

Neuroception happens *below conscious awareness*—it's your body's way of asking:

"Am I safe right now? Can I let my guard down? Or should I prepare for harm?"

And the answer comes not from logic—but from subtle, sensory data:

- Tone of voice
- Facial expression

- Body language
- Proximity
- Eye contact
- Breath rhythm
- Emotional congruence (are their words matching their energy?)

You could be in a locked room with a security guard and still feel unsafe.

Or you could be wrapped in silence with someone you love and feel completely protected.

It's not about what's happening.

It's about what your body *believes* is happening.

Fun Fact: Your Nervous System Reacts to Micro-Expressions in 33 Milliseconds

That means your body registers the flicker of anger, disappointment, or incongruence *before your brain can even name it*.

You don't just "sense vibes."

Your **ventral vagus nerve** is designed to pick up signals of emotional safety through the face, voice, and posture of others.

This system evolved for survival in early human tribes—but it's still active in your modern relationships.

Story: The Therapist with the Soft Smile and the Hard Eyes

A woman once described feeling incredibly anxious in sessions with her first therapist.

"They were kind," she said. "They said supportive things. But I always left feeling worse—like I was invisible."

What she didn't have the words for yet was this:

Her therapist's face never moved.

Their voice was warm, but their eyes were cold.

They used "empathy words," but didn't **embody** them.

Her neuroception picked up on the mismatch—and interpreted it as *danger*.

Her nervous system said:

"They're saying the right things—but they're not really with me. Be careful."

So she stayed guarded.

And no amount of insight made it feel safe to open.

Safety Is a Somatic Experience

It's not what someone *says* that makes you feel safe.

It's what your body experiences in their presence.

- Does your breath slow?
- Does your jaw unclench?
- Can your eyes soften?
- Can you stay connected to yourself while being seen?

When the answer is yes, you're in a **regulating relationship**.

When the answer is no, your system braces—even if nothing "bad" is happening.

This is why gaslighting is so devastating.

It teaches you to distrust your own neuroception.

What Safety Really Feels Like

True emotional safety isn't perfect harmony.

It's the freedom to be real without fear of punishment or abandonment.

It feels like:

- Being able to make a mistake and still be met with care
- Expressing hard truths and not being shamed
- Crying in front of someone without being told to “calm down”
- Speaking your needs and having them received—not fixed, not dismissed

And most importantly:

It feels like you don't have to *leave yourself* in order to stay connected.

That's safety.

Reset Practice: The Body Check-In for Safety

The next time you're in a conversation—or even alone—try this:

1. Pause and turn your attention inward.
2. Ask your body (not your brain):
“Do I feel safe right now?”
3. Let your body answer—not with words, but with sensations.

You might feel:

- An opening (safety)
- A tightening (protective)

- A fog (disconnect)
- A heat (mobilization)

Then ask:

“What would increase my sense of safety by just 5%?”

Often, it’s something small:

- Moving your body
- Asking for space
- Changing posture
- Making eye contact—or breaking it
- Taking a deeper breath
- Speaking the truth, even gently

You don’t need total safety to begin healing.

You just need *enough* safety to stay present.

You Can’t Regulate in an Unsafe Environment

One of the hardest truths of this work is that no amount of deep breathing can fix a chronically unsafe relationship.

You can practice every technique in this book,
but if you’re constantly in an environment where your nervous system is under threat—real or remembered—your body will stay in defense.

Regulation is not just an internal process.

It’s **contextual**.

That’s why healing requires both **internal tools** and **external boundaries**.

Safety Isn't Fragile—It's Foundational

Emotional safety is not a luxury.

It's not something you earn through being “easy to love.”

It's a **birthright**—and a biological requirement for healing, learning, and connection.

You don't have to be perfect to feel safe.

But you do have to be *honest*, present, and willing to return—even after rupture.

That's what makes your nervous system say:

“I can be here. I can open. I can rest.”

In the Next Chapter...

We'll look at what happens when emotional repair doesn't happen—and how even tiny betrayals or disconnects, when unaddressed, can lead to stored grief, burnout, and self-protection that lasts for years.

Because sometimes, what your body is holding isn't just emotion—it's **unfinished repair**.

Chapter 7

What Your Body Does With Unfinished Repair

How unresolved emotional moments become chronic patterns of protection

You never got the apology.

The conversation ended too soon.

The fight never fully repaired.

The goodbye was messy—or worse, silent.

And so you moved on.

Sort of.

You told yourself it didn't matter.

You got busy.

You convinced yourself that time would do the healing.

But here's what no one told you:

The body doesn't move on just because you do.

It holds what's unresolved until it feels safe enough to release it.

And when emotional repair doesn't happen, your nervous system stores the moment as **unfinished business**.

Not just psychologically—*somatically*.

The Repair Loop That Never Closed

Humans are wired for **rupture and repair**.

All relationships—romantic, familial, professional—include moments of disconnection. That's normal. In fact, **rupture is not the problem**.

It's the lack of repair that becomes the trauma.

Every time your body perceives emotional harm, it opens a **loop**:

1. The rupture happens (a betrayal, criticism, silence, break in trust)
2. Your nervous system enters protection mode
3. It waits for *something* to signal resolution—an apology, a gesture, a truth
4. If no repair comes, your system stays primed for more threat

That unfinished loop becomes chronic tension in your muscles, mistrust in your relationships, and internal fragmentation in your emotional self.

Story: The Email That Was Never Answered

A man once shared a story in therapy that seemed minor, even silly to him.

He'd written a heartfelt email to his best friend after a falling-out.

It was honest. Vulnerable. Apologetic.

He never got a reply.

That was five years ago.

"I moved on," he said.

But every time he tried to open up to a new friend, his chest tightened. He hesitated before speaking honestly. He never said what he really felt until it was too late.

He wasn't bitter. He was *unfinished*.

His nervous system was still waiting for a loop to close.

Fun Fact: The Brain Needs Completion to Rest

Neuroscience shows that the brain—and the nervous system—are inherently **pattern-seeking**. They crave **closure**, especially in social and emotional dynamics.

When a loop is left open (a threat without resolution, a goodbye without clarity), the system stays slightly activated—what psychologists call **limbic holding**.

You may not think about it anymore.

But your body does.

The loop stays active in the background like a program you forgot to close—draining emotional bandwidth, shaping expectations, increasing sensitivity to new relational stress.

Unrepaired Pain Becomes Your New Baseline

Eventually, the lack of repair becomes so familiar, it feels normal.

- You stop expecting to be understood.
- You stop waiting for others to take accountability.
- You begin preemptively suppressing your truth to avoid more hurt.
- You form connections that stay shallow—not because you're afraid of love, but because you're afraid of **what happens when love ruptures and no one comes back**.

This isn't a fear of intimacy.

It's a memory of abandonment that never got resolved.

The Cost of No Repair

When repair doesn't happen, your body responds with protection:

- Chronic muscle tension

- Fatigue or freeze states
- Hypervigilance in communication (“Did I say too much?”)
- Over-explaining or under-expressing
- Irrational responses that trace back to *old* wounds

Sometimes, your body is **still reacting to a moment that never got repaired**, even if the person is long gone.

Reset Practice: The Imaginary Repair

This isn’t a bypass—it’s a neuroscience-based intervention.

The brain can’t always distinguish between imagined and real relational experiences. When done with intention and somatic awareness, **imaginal repair** can help close loops the world never gave you closure on.

Here’s how:

1. Sit or lie down in a calm space.
2. Imagine the moment that felt unresolved.
3. Visualize the other person saying what you needed to hear.
 - *“I’m sorry I left.”*
 - *“You didn’t deserve that.”*
 - *“It wasn’t your fault.”*
 - *“I see you now.”*
4. Notice what your body does as you hear it.
(Tears, breath shift, tension release are all signs of stored completion.)

5. Say to yourself:

“This loop is allowed to close. I don’t have to keep waiting.”

This isn’t about pretending.

It’s about giving your nervous system the **completion** it needs to rest.

Repair in Relationships Today

Of course, the goal isn’t to rely on imaginary repair forever.

We also need to **build relationships that know how to repair in real time.**

That means:

- Acknowledging harm, even when unintentional
- Speaking impact without blame
- Slowing down when your partner shuts down
- Saying: *“That hurt. I want us to come back together. Can we try again?”*

Repair isn’t always an apology.

It’s **the return.**

It’s saying:

“The relationship matters more than being right.”

You Can Stop Holding What They Didn’t Finish

You do not have to carry the unspoken words of others.

You do not have to live in a nervous system shaped by absence.

You get to create your own ending.

One where the loop closes.

Where the hurt becomes memory—not identity.

Where the nervous system says: “*We’re done here. We can rest now.*”

That’s the reset.

Not forgetting.

But **finishing**.

In the Next Chapter...

We’ll explore how your nervous system handles other people’s feelings—and why sometimes, what you’re reacting to *isn’t even yours*.

Because your body isn’t just processing your own pain.

It’s also reacting to **what you’ve absorbed** from others.

Chapter 8

Feeling What Isn't Yours

Why your nervous system may be reacting to someone else's pain—and how to return it

You wake up heavy.

Nothing happened. Nothing's wrong.

But something feels off.

You walk into a room and sense the tension before anyone says a word.

You're suddenly anxious, irritable, or sad—but there's no clear trigger.

You wonder, *"What's wrong with me?"*

But here's a better question:

"What am I carrying that might not be mine?"

The Nervous System Is a Social Organ

Your nervous system doesn't just operate inside your skin.

It's a **relational system**—built to detect, mirror, and respond to the states of others.

This is called **co-regulation**, and it's how humans bond, survive, and feel safe.

But when co-regulation breaks down or becomes one-sided, it can turn into **emotional absorption**—carrying feelings that were never meant to be yours.

Fun Fact: Mirror Neurons Pick Up Emotions Automatically

Mirror neurons are specialized brain cells that activate when you observe someone else's emotions, expressions, or movements.

When someone frowns, your mirror neurons fire as if *you* were frowning.

When someone is anxious, your nervous system can subtly adopt that anxiety—without your permission.

That's empathy.

But unfiltered, unprocessed empathy becomes **emotional enmeshment**.

Story: The Therapist Who Couldn't Sleep

A clinician once shared that every Thursday night, she had insomnia.

Tight chest. Racing thoughts. Feelings of helplessness.

She couldn't figure it out—until she realized it followed her weekly session with a deeply depressed client.

The client didn't speak much. Didn't cry.

But their nervous system was **broadcasting despair**.

And without realizing it, the therapist was absorbing it.

Holding what wasn't hers.

Trying to metabolize pain that wasn't her responsibility.

Her body didn't betray her.

It just got confused.

You May Be Reacting to Someone Else's Regulation (or Dysregulation)

Here's what that can look like:

- You feel calm... until a certain person enters the room
- You feel pressure to fix someone else's discomfort
- You leave conversations emotionally exhausted, even if nothing "happened"

- You carry guilt or anxiety after saying no—even though it was healthy
- You “know” things you were never told—like someone is angry or lying, before any evidence appears

You’re not paranoid.

You’re perceptive.

But you may not be **anchored**.

And without anchoring, empathy becomes emotional entanglement.

Highly Sensitive ≠ Poorly Boundaried—Unless You’ve Never Been Taught How to Filter

Some nervous systems are more porous than others.

If you grew up in chaos, or with a parent who couldn't regulate, your system likely learned to scan constantly—*How is everyone feeling? Am I safe? Do I need to adjust who I am to make things okay?*

That hyper-attunement becomes a lifelong pattern of **external orientation**.

You feel what others feel before you feel what you feel.

You absorb moods and manage them before your body has a chance to check in with itself.

This is called **emotional fusion**—and over time, it leads to burnout, self-abandonment, and resentment.



Reset Practice: The Return Ritual

When you suspect you’re holding someone else’s energy, try this:

1. Pause. Get quiet. Put a hand on your body.
2. Ask: *“What part of what I’m feeling is actually mine?”*

3. Visualize gently handing the rest back—not in anger, but in clarity.

You might say (silently or aloud):

“This doesn’t belong to me. I release it with care.”

4. Take a breath and return your attention inward.

Ask: *“What’s here, now that I’m just with myself?”*

Over time, this builds **emotional sovereignty**—the ability to stand beside others without dissolving into them.

Where This Pattern Comes From

If you were the “emotionally responsible” one growing up—

The caretaker. The peacekeeper. The empath.

You may have learned to equate love with **emotional labor**.

- “If I can feel it for them, maybe I can prevent the pain.”
- “If I stay hyper-aware, maybe I won’t get hurt.”
- “If I carry their sadness, maybe they’ll love me more.”

These beliefs are unconscious, but powerful.

They shape your nervous system into a sponge when what it really needs to be is a filter.

You Are Allowed to Let Go of What Was Never Yours

You do not have to feel everything.

You do not have to carry everything.

You do not have to abandon your peace every time someone else is in pain.

You can be present without absorbing.

You can love without losing yourself.

You can care deeply without collapsing inward.

This is the reset:

Not hardening—but learning how to **filter** what you feel,
so you can stay in connection **without losing clarity**.

In the Next Chapter...

We'll explore how emotional regulation doesn't mean avoiding pain—but how to **move through pain in a way that deepens connection**, rather than breaks it.

Because pain isn't the enemy—**isolation is**.

Chapter 9

The Pain Isn't the Problem—Disconnection Is

Why we break down when we hurt alone, and how to return to safety through connection

Pain is not the enemy.

Pain is information.

Pain is proof that something matters.

Pain is the nervous system's way of saying, *"Pay attention here."*

The real suffering doesn't come from pain itself.

It comes from **disconnection inside the pain**—when we feel it alone, misunderstood, or unseen.

Your Brain Is Wired to Feel Less Pain in Connection

Research shows that physical and emotional pain share the same brain pathways—particularly in the **anterior cingulate cortex** and **insula**.

But here's what's fascinating:

When we're physically or emotionally supported, those pain signals actually decrease.

In one study, participants experienced less physical pain from an electric shock when they held the hand of someone they trusted.

Even more compelling: the closer the relationship, the lower the pain.

Your nervous system does not process pain in a vacuum.

It processes pain through the **relational field**.

Which means:

The presence of another can literally change your pain.

Not by fixing it. Not by solving it.

Just by *being with it*.

Story: The Two Sisters and the Broken Vase

When they were little, two sisters broke a vase.

One ran to their mother crying, devastated.

The other stayed silent, afraid.

The first was hugged and comforted.

The second was scolded for hiding.

Thirty years later, one sister easily shares her emotions in relationships. The other struggles to ask for help—even in crisis.

It wasn't just the pain of the vase breaking that shaped them.

It was the **presence or absence of connection** in the moment that followed.

Pain Held Alone Becomes a Story of Defectiveness

When pain goes unacknowledged, especially in early life, it often leaves behind more than sadness or fear.

It leaves behind a **story**:

- “I’m too much.”
- “My feelings push people away.”
- “No one will be there if I fall apart.”
- “I have to handle everything on my own.”

These aren't just beliefs.

They're **emotional blueprints**—stored in the nervous system, shaping how we show up in moments of vulnerability.

They are not based on truth.

They are based on **what happened when you were in pain** and no one came.

The Nervous System Interprets Abandonment as Danger

From a survival standpoint, **disconnection is threat**.

Humans are social creatures. We evolved in tribes where being cast out meant certain death.

So when we're in pain and no one reaches toward us—

When we cry and no one notices—

When we hurt and someone tells us to toughen up—

Our nervous system doesn't just register loneliness.

It registers **danger**.

And the body responds accordingly:

- Shutdown
- Emotional numbing
- Hypervigilance in relationships
- Avoidance of intimacy
- Outbursts that seem “irrational” but are really desperate protests for contact

Fun Fact: Social Pain Activates the Same Neural Regions as Physical Injury

In a landmark fMRI study, researchers discovered that social rejection activated the same brain areas involved in physical pain.

Your brain does not distinguish sharply between:

- A broken bone
- A harsh breakup
- A parent turning away when you needed comfort

They all register in the system as *pain*.

And the presence—or absence—of **soothing connection** determines how the pain is processed.

So What Does This Mean for Healing?

It means healing isn't about erasing pain.

It's about **reclaiming connection inside pain**.

The reset isn't the absence of discomfort.

It's the presence of *co-regulation* in the face of discomfort.

It's being able to say:

- “This hurts.”
- “I’m scared.”
- “I don’t know what to do.”

And having someone stay.

It's also being able to say these things **to yourself**, when no one else is available, with the same tenderness:

- “I see you.”
- “I won’t leave you.”
- “We’ll breathe through this together.”

Reset Practice: Reconnect Inside the Pain

When pain arises—emotional or physical—pause.

1. Name it: “This is sadness.” “This is fear.” “This is grief.”
2. Place a hand on your chest or cheek.
3. Say (softly):
“You are not alone. I’m here with you.”
4. If possible, reach out to someone who can hold space—not to fix, but to *witness*.
Even a message that says:
“Can you sit with me in this for a minute?”
This begins to rewire the old pattern:

“When I hurt, I disappear.”

into

“When I hurt, I can stay connected.”

Pain That’s Shared Gets Processed. Pain That’s Hidden Gets Stored.

When you hold pain in isolation, your nervous system files it under “unfinished threat.”

But when pain is **co-held**, it gets filed under “processed experience.”

That’s why talk therapy works.

Why writing works.

Why holding someone’s hand works.

Why honest conversation—even if messy—frees something inside you.

It’s not about fixing.

It’s about *witnessing*.

Your nervous system says:

“Someone stayed. It’s safe to move forward.”

Chapter 10

What the Reset Really Means

A return to your body, your truth, and your peace—without needing to be perfect

The reset isn't a technique.

It's a remembrance.

A coming back—not to who you were before things fell apart,
but to who you've always been beneath the reaction, the protection, the overwhelm.

It's not about controlling your emotions.

It's about *hearing* them.

Not about achieving permanent calm.

But learning how to *return*—again and again—to safety, to breath, to clarity, to connection.

The Reset Is Not a Fix

Your nervous system is not broken.

Your reactions are not defects.

They're adaptations—wise, creative, protective strategies designed to help you survive what felt unbearable.

The reset does not punish your patterns.

It honors the purpose they served—and then gently helps you choose something different.

Where there was shutdown, it invites presence.

Where there was flight, it invites stillness.

Where there was fawning, it invites boundary.

Where there was rage, it invites root.

Where there was dissociation, it invites reunion.

The Reset Is Integration

You are not one part—brain, body, emotion, story.

You are all of it.

And true healing means bringing these parts *together*:

- What your body feels
- What your past taught you
- What your emotions want to say
- What your nervous system is wired to protect
- And what your future is asking you to trust

To reset is to give all those voices a seat at the table—and still be the one choosing from a place of calm, not chaos.

The Reset Is Permission

You're allowed to feel.

You're allowed to pause.

You're allowed to take up space.

You're allowed to need time, softness, repair, and truth.

You're allowed to stop overexplaining.

To stop carrying what isn't yours.

To stop performing peace and start *practicing presence*.

You don't need a new personality.

You need a new pattern.

And the pattern begins when you stop abandoning yourself the moment things get uncomfortable.

The Reset Is a Practice

Not a one-time realization.

Not a morning routine.

A living commitment to returning:

- To the body when you start spinning
- To the breath when you lose your place
- To honesty when you want to hide
- To grounding when you want to run
- To compassion when you want to shame
- To connection when you want to isolate

It's not about never being dysregulated.

It's about *not staying there forever*.

The Reset Is a Return to Trust

Trust in your body.

Trust in your signals.

Trust in your right to heal—even if the world never gave you a manual.

You don't have to be fully healed to show up with love.

You don't have to be perfect to be present.

The goal is not to feel good all the time.

The goal is to feel **safe** enough to be with what's real—and to know how to come home to yourself when it hurts.

That's the reset.

Not perfection.

Not erasure.

But return.

Your Reset Reflection Guide

A quiet space to meet yourself after everything you've learned

These questions are not for performance.

They are invitations—to pause, to notice, and to come closer to the truth inside you.

There are no right answers.

Only honest ones.

You can answer them slowly, aloud, in a journal, or in silence.

What matters most is that you respond **with presence**, not pressure.

Body + Awareness

- What sensations do I most associate with safety in my body?
- What signals let me know I'm dysregulated?
- When do I tend to override those signals, and why?

Emotion + Expression

- What emotion do I most often suppress or hide?
- When I express how I feel, what do I fear will happen?
- What would honesty feel like in my body—if I trusted I'd still be loved?

Patterns + Compassion

- What old survival pattern do I now see differently after reading this book?

- What am I proud of myself for enduring—and ready to stop reliving?
- What's one story about my emotional life I'm ready to rewrite?

Relationship + Repair

- Who in my life can co-regulate with me—and how do I know?
- What small act could bring more emotional safety to my relationships?
- Is there a repair I still long for? Can I offer myself what I didn't receive?

Practice + Return

- What will I come back to when I lose my grounding?
- What simple phrase reminds me I am allowed to feel, pause, and reset?
- What would it mean to believe I'm not broken, just rewiring?

When you've finished, breathe.

You don't need to do everything differently right away.

You only need to remember: **the way back to yourself is already within you.**

A Letter to You, the One Who Stayed

You've made it to the end.

Not just the end of a book.

The end of a chapter in your life where you may have believed that you were too much, too sensitive, too scattered, too emotional, too hard to love.

What you are is attuned.

What you've always been is wise.

And what your body has been trying to do—sometimes with fire, sometimes with silence—is keep you safe.

This book was never about changing who you are.

It was about helping you understand *why* you react the way you do—

So you could stop apologizing for it.

So you could stop fighting yourself.

So you could begin to reset—not to become someone else,
but to finally return to someone you may have left behind.

You.

The you who breathes without bracing.

Who speaks without shrinking.

Who pauses without guilt.

Who knows that safety isn't perfection. It's presence.

If you remember nothing else, remember this:

You are not broken.

You are not too late.

You are not weak for needing rest.

You are not wrong for feeling deeply.

And you are allowed to begin again—every single time.

Let the reset be a soft return.

To breath.

To truth.

To your body.

To your boundaries.

To your knowing.

To your peace.

I wrote this for the part of you that has always known the way back—
even when the world taught you to forget.

Keep coming home.

With breath,

With grace,

With every new moment—

You reset.

And that is more than enough.

—Christine

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This list reflects only a fraction of the knowledge that shaped this book. The nervous system is vast. But your return to it can be simple.

About Author

Christine Walter is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Professional Certified Coach (PCC), and the creator of **NeuroEmotional Systems Therapy™ (NEST™)**—an integrative therapeutic model that blends neuroscience, emotional regulation, and systemic healing.

Before becoming a therapist, Christine was an All-American tennis player and professional athlete. Her background in high-performance sport informs her work with nervous system resilience, emotional precision, and embodied presence.

Over the past two decades, she has worked at the intersection of psychotherapy, neuroscience, somatic awareness, and trauma repair—developing tools that help individuals and couples not only understand their emotional patterns, but transform them.

This book introduces the **NeuroEmotional Reset™ (NER™)** approach, a foundational pathway within the larger NEST™ model. While NEST™ offers a comprehensive framework for clinicians and practitioners, **NER™ is designed for everyday individuals**—those ready to understand why they react the way they do, and how to shift those reactions at the nervous system level.

Christine is the founder of **Success Source Therapy**, co-director of **BeYogaFit**, and a recognized leader in emotional health and nervous system science. Her work helps people reconnect with their truth—not by avoiding emotion, but by learning how to regulate and reset from within.