

THE EVIDENCE MAP

What the research actually shows about your heart, your breath and your brain, sorted by how sure science is. One page, no hype.



THE EVIDENCE THERMOMETER ●●●● High consensus ●●●● Moderate evidence ●●●● Preliminary ●●●● Not shown

1 · HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS HIGH CONSENSUS

A two-way conversation
Heart and brain talk in both directions, through nerves, pressure waves and hormones.

The vagus is the brake
The vagus nerve slows the heart; the baroreflex tunes pulse and blood pressure beat by beat.

HRV = flexibility
Heart rate variability reflects how adaptable your nervous system is. Higher is usually better.

The heart has its own neurons
Tens of thousands of them handle local reflexes. They don't think, remember or decide.

Wearables are estimates
Watches, rings and apps measure HRV with errors. Compare yourself with yourself, never across devices.

Feeling your heartbeat
How well you sense your own pulse is linked to anxiety and emotion. Linked, not proven to cause.

2 · WHAT THE PRACTICES CAN DO

IN THE MOMENT		
1	Slow breathing calms the heart right away A slower pace and a longer exhale lower pulse and raise HRV within minutes.	●●●● MODERATE EVIDENCE
2	Resonance breathing (about 6 breaths a minute) Amplifies the heart's natural rhythm. Lasting effects are real but moderate.	●●●● MODERATE EVIDENCE
WITH REGULAR PRACTICE		
3	Less stress and anxiety HRV biofeedback helps: small to moderate effects, varying a lot between studies.	●●●● MODERATE EVIDENCE
4	Lower blood pressure Slow breathing can lower it. That doesn't mean fewer heart attacks or quitting medication.	●●●● MODERATE EVIDENCE
5	Low mood and depression May help as an add-on to treatment, never instead of it.	●●●● PRELIMINARY
6	Heart "coherence" training (HeartMath) Conditional support for stress once independent and company-linked studies are separated.	●●●● PRELIMINARY
7	Chronic pain and PTSD A promising support line. Trauma is not "stored in the heart".	●●●● PRELIMINARY
8	Better sleep Slow breathing before bed may help. Studies are small and short.	●●●● PRELIMINARY
9	Apps and remote coaching Uneven results: some match in-person training, many don't.	●●●● PRELIMINARY · MIXED
10	Less inflammation The vagus tames inflammation; whether breathing changes it in a meaningful way is unknown.	●●●● PRELIMINARY · EARLY

3 · POPULAR CLAIMS THE EVIDENCE DOESN'T SUPPORT NOT SHOWN

✗ Transplanted hearts carry memories
Anecdotes only. No reliable study shows donor memories or traits passing on.

✗ Your heart's field broadcasts emotions
No sound evidence that it transmits feelings, "senses" the future, or links to Earth's magnetic field.

✗ 60-second vagus "resets"
Cold water, humming, gargling and ear gadgets don't deliver the effects they're sold with.

SAFE FOR ALMOST EVERYONE
Gentle, slow breathing without breath-holds or forcing. Comfortable, never strained.

STOP IF YOU FEEL
Dizziness, tingling in hands or lips, chest discomfort or a racing heart. Return to normal breathing.

ASK YOUR DOCTOR FIRST
If you have a heart rhythm or lung condition, panic disorder, or are pregnant.