

Amelia Barili

***Ancient Wisdom and Neuroscience:
Learn to Reset Your Nervous System***

Our nervous system shapes the quality of our life. It affects our health, healing and well-being. It also impacts our capacity to learn, to relate, and to perceive and respond to the world with clarity and inner strength.

When we face big challenges (for example a divorce, a terminal disease, a bleak future) our autonomic nervous system gets triggered into automatic survival responses. We experience what is called Fight or Flight (the anxiety and restlessness of an overstimulated Sympathetic Nervous System as an adaptive response so we can confront the danger or flee from it). We may also experience Freeze/Collapse (the numbness of an overstimulated Parasympathetic Nervous System as an adaptive response so we don't feel so much the pain of the situation we are in).

These neurophysiological responses are the *adaptive survival mechanisms* that can help us to respond and overcome the challenges we face. They are designed to be momentarily responses to the dangers and threats we encounter. As healthy responses they might last from 20 minutes or so to a couple of days.

These responses become “maladaptive” when we are stuck on them, as when we become overwhelmed by repetitive cycles of negative thoughts and emotions for weeks, months or years. It is as if we have can't find the switch to reset our nervous system towards experiencing safety and connection again.

Continuous stress and traumatic situations disrupt our integrative functioning, impacting our emotional life: our inner sense of who we are when amid this chaos and rigidity, and making it difficult to have rewarding relationships with others. The continuous dysregulation of our nervous system also throws our organism out of balance by negatively impacting the functioning of our vital organs. Some of the physical and emotional signs we might experience are breathing difficulties, heart problems, poor digestion and impaired sleep, as well as irritability, restlessness, numbness and despair.

The good news is that we have within ourselves the capacity to reset our nervous system and to restore a sense of balance and healing in the continuum of our body, mind and spirit.

In this course you will learn embodied practices to develop your inner resources for resetting your nervous system anytime anywhere, and for cultivating clarity, inner strength, resilience and wellbeing in your daily life. These practices are drawn from ancient healing wisdom traditions and are backed up by neuroscience.

You'll discover how these embodied practices can help you develop a strong and resilient nervous system by using your breath, your healing touch and your posture and movement to align with your healing capacities and your deeper purpose in life.

This is mainly an experiential course. We will concentrate on these embodied practices of resetting your nervous system, so you can become familiar with them and use them daily to help you release anxiety, fear, despair, and to experience

clarity, inner balance, gratitude and even joy. To better visualize and locate these ancient wisdom embodied practices, we will briefly review the neuroanatomy and neurophysiology of our Vagus nerve and our Autonomic Nervous System and the vital organs they impact. We will also explore the close relation between those organs and the specific emotions that most affect their well-functioning. This course offers both conceptual and practical knowledge for your healing journey.

These techniques are easy to learn and to integrate in your life no matter your age or physical condition. We will practice them together in class and I will provide you with a few articles and videos for you to continue reflecting and practicing at home. Please remember that your nervous system learns by repetition and kindness.

Learning about the practices is 50% of your transformational journey. The other 50% is you integrating them in your daily live. **I am inviting you to practice *daily* at home the techniques from these course that most resonate with you.** They are the tools to restore healthy connections in the continuum of your body, mind and spirit. These embodied practices and insights will show you how to reset your nervous system and will help you create a new baseline neurological platform that will enhance your health, your relationships and the quality of your personal, professional and community life.

For many years we have focused on the role of our brain in figuring our way out of the challenges we experience. The last two decades have witnessed an increasing emphasis on the role not only of the brain but of our whole organism as influenced by our autonomic nervous system in generating resilience and in supporting our health and healing. In this course, we will integrate discoveries and embodied practices from neuroscience and ancient wisdom traditions to be able to shift from states of anxiety and isolation into states of embodied safety and connection.

Week One

Intro: Is it Possible to Reset our Nervous System? An Integrative Approach to Embodying Safety and Connection

Week Two

Resetting your Nervous System and Embodying Safety through the Healing Power of your Touch

Week Three

Resetting your Nervous System and Embodying Safety through the Healing Power of your Breath

Week Four

Resetting your Nervous System and Embodying Safety through the Healing Power of your Posture and Contemplative Movement

Optional resources to begin reflecting about your potential for transformation:

- ***Learning to Learn. Neurobiology and Cognitive Science as Bases of Autonomous Learning.*** Amelia Barili (2007)
- ***The Power of Your Nervous System for Healthy Relationships and Self- Healing.*** Stephen Porges and Amelia Barili (2021)
- ***Can Thoughts and Actions Change Our Brains?*** Ira Flatow and Sharon Begley (2007)
- ***Every Breath You Take.*** Stephen Porges, Amelia Barili, David DeSteno (2023)
- ***Embodying Safety: Integrating Yoga, Qigong and Polyvagal Theory.*** Stephen Porges and Amelia Barili (2023)
- ***A Healthy Mind: Interconnection and Integration.*** Dan Stephen Porges and Amelia Barili (2022)
- ***Mindfulness and Resilience.*** Rick Hanson and Amelia Barili (2021)
- ***How to guide your nervous system back to calm and healing*** Stephen Porges and Amelia Barili (2025)

I will be adding other supplementary resources to our list when our course starts.

See you in class!

