

ADVANCED LEVEL RITUAL: ORIENTING



Advanced Level Ritual: Orienting

Orienting engages the upper part of our vagus nerve—the social portion that supplies nerves to the facial muscles and throat. In primitive times, orienting meant we were scanning our environment to identify threats lurking in the tall grass. We still have that same threat bias driving us when we're under stress, scanning for the paper tigers lurking in the grasslands of our imaginations. Orienting is a ritual we should be repeating to help soften our negativity bias and strengthen our felt sense of safety.

If you have any form of social anxiety—whether that's in intimate relationships, one-on-one, in groups or presenting in front of a crowd—you get anxious because this part of the vagus nerve perceives threat instead of recognizing a social situation where you are welcome. Here's how you change socially and shift from threat to safety. As with all the rituals you're learning, slow yourself way down. The slower the pace, the better. That's what's going to support you in coming back into your window of resilience.

Orienting Ritual:

- Go to a place—indoors or outdoors—where you find your surroundings pleasing. Perhaps a garden or sunroom. Begin by breathing slowly and mindfully. Now, *let your eyes lead you* to wherever they wish to go. When your eyes naturally land on something pleasant, have them focus on just a small portion of what you see (e.g., not the whole tree or plant or picture, but a small part, like the leaf or something within the picture) so that your eyes can fully rest into the part without straining to see more.
- Using the leaf as an example, allow your eyes to observe it in detail: Notice the color of the leaf, its shape, the way it dances in the sunlight or sways with the wind. Now take this awareness inside your body and notice what's different (here's interoception again!). Take your time.
- Hang out with the body's internal sensations as you allow your eyes to gaze upon the object. Continue with this ritual for three to five minutes...or more if you find it restorative.

Depending on how much you need to repeat this practice, stay with it for as long as necessary. Over time, this ritual will help you stay calm and grounded in situations where you might normally experience social anxiety. Because the root causes of anxiety can be multifaceted, you may find that other exercises/rituals are more beneficial for a one situation or another. Experiment! You can also view the “Orienting” demo at IrisInstitute.com



REFLECTIONS

WHAT’S DIFFERENT?



Advanced Level Somatic Dimensions Noticing Inner Experience

Refer to the examples here to describe your inner experience (aka, interoception), use the Glossaries of Somatic Dimensions and Emotions (see appendix), or add your own:

Airy	Emotion(s)	Image(s)	Softening
Breath	Expansive	Lukewarm	Softer
Brisk	Fluid	Melting	Smooth
Buzzing	Glowing	Oblong	Snug
Calmer	Grounded	Pulsing	Spacious
Comfy	Heart Beating	Relaxed	Tepid
Cooler	Heavier	Round	Tingling
Color(s)	Held	Settled	Vibrating
Dense	Hotter	Slower	Warmer