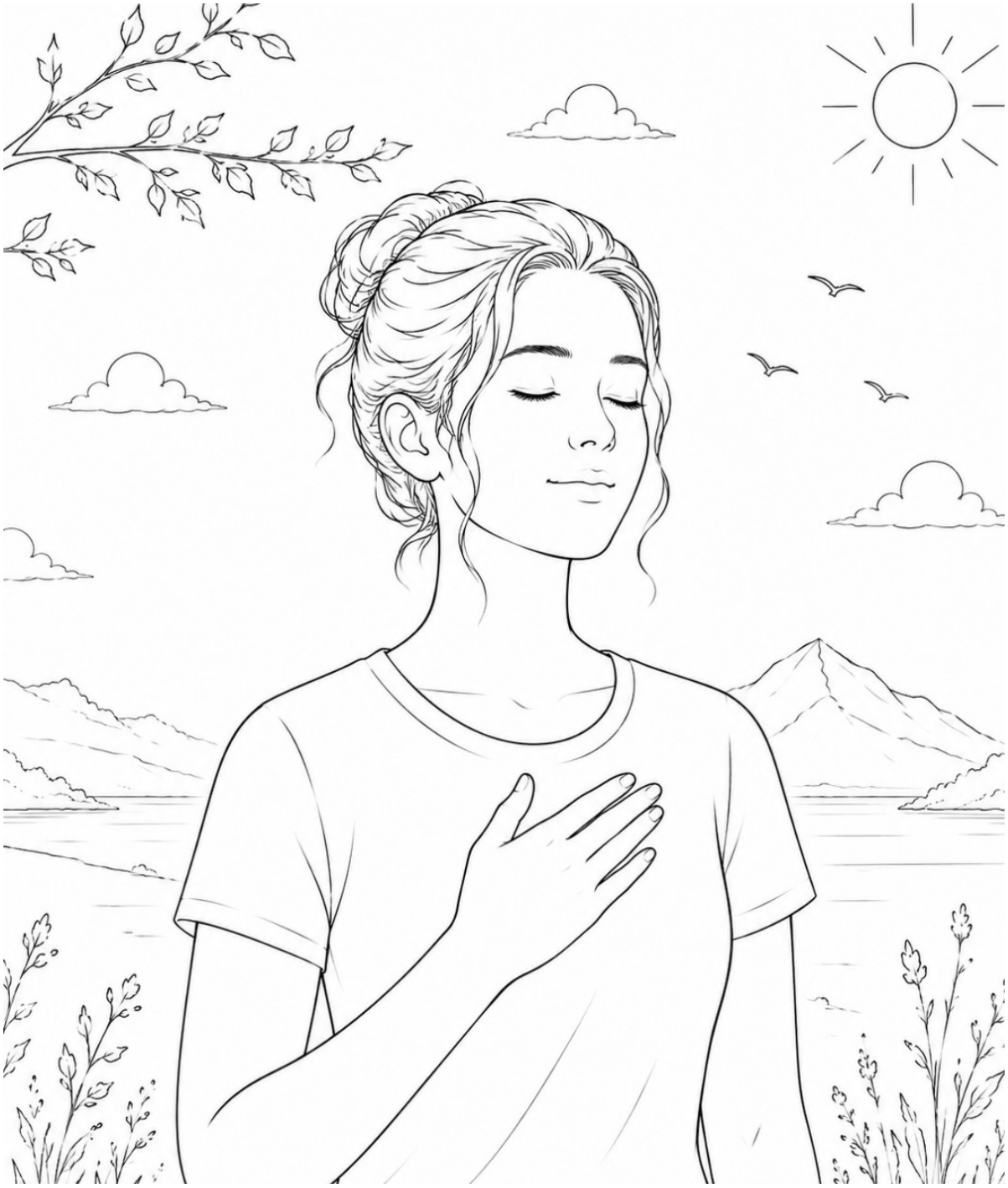
VENTRAL VAGAL — Calm & Safety

HEART HAND

Self-touch signals safety to the autonomic system.



BLOOMING from Within

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Why this practice

When you are anxious, your nervous system loses its anchor in the present moment. Your hand's warmth and gentle pressure on the sternum directly activates the care and connection system in the brain. It is one of the fastest ways you can shift yourself out of a threat-detection state and back into felt safety — not because the threat has gone, but because your body has received a signal: you are here, and you are okay, right now. The vagus nerve runs close to the surface of the chest, and this simple touch can stimulate it directly, producing a measurable calming response within seconds.

→ *See also: Chapter One: Before Diagnosis — Supporting Yourself*

How to practise

1. Place one hand flat over your sternum, in the centre of your chest.
2. Press gently — just enough to feel the warmth and slight weight.
3. Take three slow, intentional breaths. Let the exhale be longer than the inhale.
4. Stay for 1–2 minutes, or as long as feels settling.

Best used: *Whenever you remember. Morning, evening, in the car, in the waiting room. No setup required. Pairs well with everything else.*

What you might notice

A slight softening in the chest or shoulders. A feeling of being less alone with what you're carrying. Sometimes tears arrive — that is not a sign this isn't working. It is a sign it is.

A Deeper Dive — for every Ventral Vagal practice:

Notice this shift without needing it to be permanent or to 'fix' anything. The aim isn't to feel calm forever — it's to practise willingness: am I willing to have this moment of ease, without bracing for it to end?

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