

## **Online Project for Activity- or Anthroposophy-based Stress Reduction (ABSR)**

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[www.absr.international](http://www.absr.international)

### **ABSR as an Element of Pedagogy**

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Since 2012, the exercises from the lecture "Overcoming Nervousness" (Steiner R. Occult Science: An Outline. GA 143. 4th edition, 1994, lecture from January 11, 1912) have been conducted in my psychiatric-psychotherapeutic practice and in the Johannes Branch of the Anthroposophical Society in Bern, along with Eurythmy Therapy. Initially led by Theodor Hundhammer and later by Adèle Waldmann, these exercises were conducted in group courses. Starting in 2019, these courses are also available online as Activity- or Anthroposophy-based Stress Reduction (ABSR).

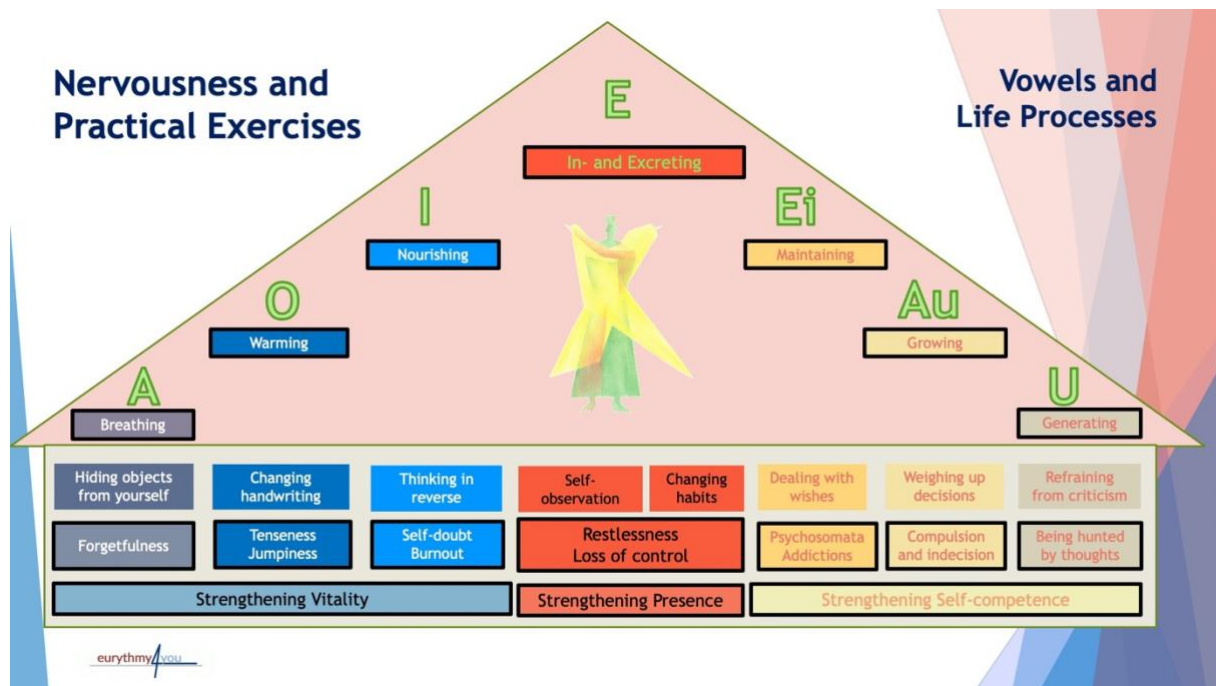
With the support of Prof. Dr. med. Ursula Wolf (Professor of Anthroposophical Medicine, Institute of Complementary and Integrative Medicine at the University of Bern), evaluations have been carried out as dissertations and master's theses on group and online courses. These evaluations are currently in publication. The current online project aims to enable qualitative evaluations of the Steiner exercises with a larger number of participants.

In the tabular overview of symptoms of nervousness with the exercises from the lecture "Overcoming Nervousness," a sevenfold pattern emerges:

1. Mild forgetfulness - Placing objects I want to find again in various places and vividly visually imprinting them in my memory.
2. Disconnection of the inner soul core from what the mind (during work) must accomplish, physical body movements contrasting with the soul's intent - Writing as if painting.
3. Limited connection of human soul core with what people accept - Letting thoughts run backward.
4. Obvious nervous behavior, weak control over actions and gestures - Observing body movements, intentionally refraining from actions, doing things differently than usual.
5. Forms of illness that deceptively mimic organic diseases, struggle with renouncing desires - Suppressing insignificant wishes.
6. Inability to progress to decisions - Making decisions after weighing pros and cons and feasibility.
7. Mental restlessness, inability to hold and follow thoughts - Exercising only valid criticism based on the matter, refraining from hasty and frequent judgments.

In the final section of the lecture, particular emphasis is placed on the interaction and strengthening of the human spiritual members:

"The right thing will be to arrange one's entire life in such a way that people are generally less afflicted by illnesses, or that illnesses are less oppressive. They will be less oppressive if through such small exercises, individuals strengthen the influence of the ego on the astral body, the astral body on the etheric body, and the etheric body on the physical body. Self-education and influence on education are things that can arise from our fundamental anthroposophical convictions."



Impressively highlighted here is the strengthening of the spiritual members, as is also known in relation to the basic (therapeutic) pedagogical principle, along with the reference to pedagogy:

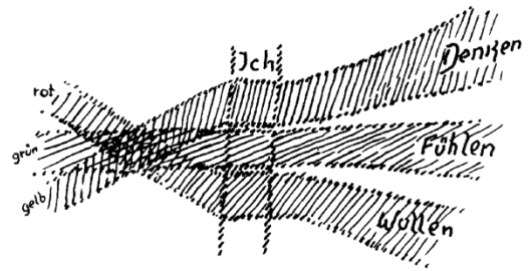
"Here a pedagogical law confronts us that appears in all pedagogy. This law is, that which is effective in the world on any element of human nature, no matter where it comes from, comes from the higher element next in line, and that this is the only effective way of development. For development of the physical body, that which lives in the etheric body is effective; for development of the etheric body, that which lives in the astral body is effective; for development of the astral body, only that which lives in the ego is effective; and for the ego, only that which lives in the spirit self is effective... What does this mean? If you perceive that in a child the etheric body is in some way underdeveloped, you must shape your own astral body so that it can act correctively on the child's etheric body. With regard to the educational schema, we can simply state:

<u>Child:</u>	Physical body	<u>Educator:</u>	Etheric body
	Etheric body		Astral body
	Astral body		I
	I		Spirit self

The educator's own etheric body must - and this must happen through their preparatory education - be able to act upon the child's physical body. The educator's own astral body must be able to act upon the child's etheric body. The educator's own ego must be able to act upon the child's astral body. And now you will even be surprised within, because here stands the educator's spirit self, which you will believe is not developed. This must act upon the child's ego. This is how the law works." (Steiner R. Curative Education Course, GA 317, 8th edition 1995, p. 33f.)

The principles of the exercises from the lecture "Overcoming Nervousness," as stated above, are based on one hand on the sevenfold or eightfold nature in their affinity to the Eightfold path that Steiner published as exercises for the days of the week (Steiner R. How to Know Higher Worlds, GA 245, 1993, p. 26 ff.). On the other hand, connections can be found that contribute to the strengthening of the spiritual members, which are crucial for (therapeutic) pedagogy.

Another aspect of the exercises becomes apparent in relation to stress reactions, as typically found in anxiety and trauma-related disorders. In 1917, Steiner explained in a lecture on psychoanalysis (Individual Spirit Beings and their Activity in the Soul of Man, GA 178, 6th edition 2022, lecture from November 11, 1917, p. 159 ff.) what the psychic phenomena are that are observed and treated in "nervous illnesses." These are either "unwarranted coalescence," a "jumbling together" of the soul activities of thinking, feeling, and willing due to weakened ego influence, or "dissociation," a separation where the etheric body cannot hold the ego and soul activities.



The first three exercises from "Overcoming Nervousness" (as mentioned above) counteract the tendency of dissociation by strengthening the etheric body. The last three exercises work from the ego upon the astral body, which is particularly observable in shame or panic reactions, as seen in anxiety disorders and post-traumatic symptoms. The fourth exercise stands in the middle and has both aspects depending on execution. From the principles of the exercises in relation to the polarities of stress reactions, the tendency of dissociation, and shame/panic with the mentioned comorbidities, it becomes clear that the ABSR course can contribute to the strengthening of the spiritual members, counteracting one-sided pathological tendencies.

From these points of view, the course can be seen as a stabilization method for the cohesion of the spiritual and soul elements through practical and eurythmic or eurythmy-based exercises for stress situations, and thus also as a support for pedagogical activities. Particularly, the individual's free decision-making and activity are reinforced.



#### Further Literature:

- Haas H. Nervousness and Anxiety, Anthrosana Issue 237 (available in Germany through Gesundheit aktiv)
- Steiner R. Educating Oneself – The Secret of Health (Sich selbst erziehen – Das Geheimnis der Gesundheit). Edited and introduced by Harald Haas, Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 3rd edition, 2021.
- Steiner R. Boundary Experiences of the Soul – Fear, Shame, Doubt, and Most Terrifying Confusion (Grenzerlebnisse der Seele – Schreck, Scham Zweifel und schreckvollste Verwirrung). Introduced and commented on by Harald Haas. Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 2nd edition, 2021.