



The Wellness Column

by Amanda J. Butler

Mallorca has long attracted gifted practitioners drawn to the island's unique blend of nature, a special energy and slower Mediterranean rhythm. Among them is therapist Libby Pickett, whose work focuses on an increasingly important topic in modern wellbeing: the nervous system.

Through her practice in vagus nerve toning, Libby helps people reconnect with a sense of calm, resilience and inner balance using simple, natural techniques that work with the body's own intelligence.

In a world where many people feel locked into constant stress, her approach offers something refreshingly simple: learning how to guide the body back into a state of safety and relaxation.

Understanding the Vagus Nerve

At the heart of Libby's work lies the **vagus nerve**, one of the most important communication pathways in the body.

This remarkable nerve runs from the brainstem through the neck and chest and down into the abdomen, connecting to the heart, lungs and digestive organs. It plays a central role in regulating heart rate, digestion, breathing, immune function and emotional balance.

When the vagus nerve is functioning well, the body can move naturally out of stress

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described as the fight or flight response, where the body becomes alert and ready for action.

The third is the **dorsal state**, where the system moves into a state of deep shutdown or withdrawal after prolonged stress or overwhelm.

"Our goal is not to eliminate stress," Libby says. "Some stress is natural and healthy. But we want the body to be able to return easily to the relaxed ventral state."

A Personal Journey Into Healing

Libby's work is deeply rooted in her own healing journey. Originally from Scotland, she grew up surrounded by nature in the countryside of the Carse of Gowrie in Perthshire, a landscape rich in folklore and natural beauty. Horses, animals and the quiet rhythms of rural life shaped her early connection to the natural world. Later, she trained in massage therapy and Reiki energy healing, eventually moving to Mallorca where she managed a holistic centre in Deià for several years.

But the deeper turning point came through a personal crisis. In 2009, during an extremely stressful period involving the breakdown of her marriage while raising two very young children, Libby began experiencing multiple panic attacks every day.

"I suddenly had dizzy spells, strange hearing sensations and the feeling that I might faint," she recalls. "It was completely debilitating." Doctors could find no physical cause, and medication was offered as the primary solution. Instead, Libby began searching for answers about what was happening inside her

foundations. By breathing slowly into the belly and extending the exhale longer than the inhale, the body naturally shifts into a calmer state.

Sound and vibration are also powerful tools. Humming, singing, chanting and even laughter can stimulate the vagus nerve and create a soothing effect throughout the body.

Other techniques include gentle neck and shoulder movements, massaging the jaw and ears, tapping the thymus gland to stimulate immune response, and even simple practices like gargling water or splashing the face with cold water.

"Many people don't realise that a branch of the vagus nerve actually comes close to the surface around the ears," Libby explains. "So even gently rubbing the ears can stimulate relaxation."

During a typical session, these techniques are combined with guided breathing, mindful awareness and positive affirmations designed to reinforce a sense of safety and inner strength. Clients often report feeling calmer within minutes. But the deeper benefits come through regular practice over time. "It is subtle, but it can also be profound," Libby says. "When your nervous system feels safe, everything in life begins to change."

Beyond Stress Relief

While vagus nerve toning can support issues such as anxiety, sleep problems and digestive challenges, Libby believes the impact goes far beyond physical symptoms. When the nervous system is regulated, people often find they can think more clearly, make

she says. "Once they understand how to calm their nervous system, it can transform how they navigate stress – and every area of their life will be impacted in a positive way."

A Quiet Revolution in Wellbeing

In recent years the vagus nerve has become a growing focus of research within neuroscience and integrative medicine. Many experts now recognise the importance of nervous system regulation for both mental and physical health. For Libby, however, the work remains deeply personal.

Her journey from a place of overwhelming anxiety to a life dedicated to helping others find calm continues to inspire her practice. "Something so simple can be so powerful," she reflects. "Learning how to return your body to safety changes everything."

In as little as 10–15 minutes a day, she believes, anyone can begin to restore balance, reconnect with their inner strength and rediscover a sense of peace. After my session with Libby I felt a wave of inner calm and peace wash over me – I left with increased energy, my stress levels had reduced substantially and my vitality felt renewed. With such a simple practice I was amazed at the impact it can have over the body and nervous system.

For more information about Libby Pickett's work and her vagus nerve toning programme, visit www.vagusnervetoning.com.

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Finding Calm Within:

Celebrating the power, perspective and presence of women in Mallorca

and back into calm. When it becomes underactive or dysregulated, people may feel trapped in a constant state of tension, anxiety or fatigue.

"Through the vagus nerve, the body speaks to the brain – not the other way around," Libby explains. "Our organs, our gut, our heartbeat are all constantly reporting their experience inward and upward, which is why stress can be felt so physically, so deeply, even when we can't explain why."

In fact, around 80 percent of the information carried by the vagus nerve travels from the body to the brain, rather than the other way around. This means our bodies are continually gathering signals about safety, stress and emotional states.

Libby explains that the nervous system generally operates in three states.

The first is the **ventral state**, where we feel relaxed, safe and connected. This is the ideal state for digestion, sleep, creativity and emotional wellbeing.

The second is the **sympathetic state**, often

body.

"I realised my nervous system had gone into shock," she says. "My body no longer felt safe." This experience led her into years of study and exploration around nervous system regulation, psychology and holistic healing practices. Eventually her path led her to work alongside clinician Kelga Cooper at the functional medicine clinic Functional Medicine 101 in Palma. Together they began developing supportive practices to help patients regulate their nervous systems.

Over time, Libby refined her own intuitive approach, combining breathwork, sound, movement and awareness techniques to activate the vagus nerve and restore balance.

Simple Practices With Profound Effects

One of the most striking aspects of Libby's work is its simplicity. Rather than complex equipment or clinical devices, vagus nerve toning relies on gentle practices that anyone can incorporate into daily life.

Deep diaphragmatic breathing is one of the

better decisions and move forward in their lives with greater confidence.

"For me, it's about helping people live their best lives," she says. "If you don't feel safe in your body, it's very difficult to step into your full potential."

Libby now offers both one to one sessions and a very affordable online course designed to teach people these simple techniques step by step. Her passion is to bring nervous system awareness into everyday life in a practical and approachable way.

"This work is not complicated," she says. "But when people learn these tools, they can use them anywhere. At work, at home, when they cannot sleep, or when they feel overwhelmed."

She believes these techniques could be particularly valuable in high pressure environments such as the yachting industry, where crew members often work long hours in close quarters far from family and support networks.

"People just need to be given the tools,"

