

Nervous System Reset: TTC & Cortisol

Are you feeling stressed and overwhelmed?

@FertilitybyErika



Hello, I'm Erika

I'm a woman's hormone health practitioner, fertility awareness instructor and reproductive biologist with a passion for helping individuals and couples optimize their fertility and hormones to take charge of their reproductive health.

This reset will provide you with essential information on your journey to understanding your nervous system and how it links to your fertility and hormones. It is designed to help you identify red signals and learn the practical tools to start changing your stress response today!

In case you would still feel overwhelmed and STRESSED I offer my free **Root Cause & Cycle Mapping Session**: 45 minutes to identify the 2-3 most likely root causes in your case, and map your next steps.

APPLY FOR ROOT CAUSE &
CYCLE MAPPING SESSION



Erika H.

Contact details
[@fertilitybyerika](https://www.instagram.com/fertilitybyerika)
erika@befertile.co

The Missing Piece in Your Fertility or Hormone Journey

If you've been doing "all the right things" - tracking your cycle, changing your diet, taking supplements - but you still feel wired, tired, anxious, inflamed, or stuck... your stress physiology (nervous system + HPA axis) may be the piece that's missing.

Reminder: this is not about "relaxing more" or doing perfect self-care. It's about giving your body the signals it needs to ovulate, regulate, and recover.

Why the Nervous System Matters for TTC & Hormones

When your brain perceives ongoing stress (mental, physical, emotional, under-eating, overtraining, blood sugar crashes, inflammation), it prioritizes survival physiology.

That stress response is coordinated largely through your HPA axis (Hypothalamus → Pituitary → Adrenals), which helps regulate cortisol, energy, inflammation, sleep, and blood sugar.

When the HPA axis is dysregulated, it often shows up as:

- disrupted sleep (especially waking 2–4am)
- anxiety, irritability, or feeling “on edge”
- fatigue but difficulty resting
- cravings, lightheadedness, shaky feelings between meals
- cycle changes (irregular cycles, short luteal phase, spotting)

The hormone connection: estrogen + progesterone = stress resilience

Your sex hormones don't just affect your cycle—they also affect your brain. Estradiol (estrogen) supports stress resilience
Progesterone supports calm and recovery.

What this means practically:

If ovulation is inconsistent (and progesterone is low), many women feel less resilient to stress – especially in the luteal phase because progesterone's calming support is reduced.

Signs Your Stress Physiology May Be Impacting TTC & Hormones

Nervous system / HPA axis patterns

- Waking up between 2–4am, racing thoughts, trouble falling back asleep
- “Wired at night, exhausted in the morning”
- Afternoon energy crash (2–4pm)
- Anxiety that spikes around ovulation or before your period
- Feeling worse with fasting, keto/very low carb, or long gaps between meals
- Craving sugar/caffeine to function
- Feeling inflamed, puffy, or having persistent digestive symptoms

Cycle patterns that often overlap

- Irregular or unpredictable cycles
- Short luteal phase, spotting before period
- PMS that feels like anxiety/insomnia/rage rather than just “moodiness”
- TTC with no success even with strong timing and “normal” basic labs

Feeling called out by this list? You don't have to figure out your nervous system alone.

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CYCLE MAPPING SESSION**

We'll talk through your symptoms, history, goals and next best steps

Daily Meal Timing (Your Nervous System's "Schedule")

These are foundational but implement slowly, one step at a time.

1) Eat within 1-2 hours of waking

This supports stable blood sugar/insulin and reduces the chance of a stress-hormone-driven morning crash.

2) Space meals about 3-4 hours apart

For many women predictable meals help prevent blood sugar dips that trigger stress hormone. Some women do best with 2-4 hour spacing

3) Protein-forward mornings

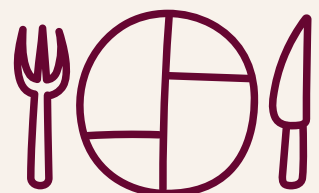
Higher protein earlier to stabilize blood sugar through the day; moderate carbs often work better later in the day. If you tend toward low blood sugar moderate fat + moderate carbs is often better than strict low carb. Consider a snack between meals and be cautious with intermittent fasting.

4) Avoid snacking within 2 hours of bedtime

Unless you have clear signs of nighttime blood sugar instability (see bedtime snack section).

5) Overnight fast from dinner to breakfast

Keep it gentle - not pushing for extended fasting



6) Hydration = stress support

Dehydration is a physiological stressor. A simple baseline is the "8x8" rule (eight 8-oz glasses). Add lemon/lime/grapefruit or sparkling water if that helps you stay consistent.

Measure Your Stress (HRV Biofeedback)

A powerful way to “make the invisible visible” is HRV (Heart Rate Variability).

HRV basics:

- HRV = difference in time between heartbeats
- Higher HRV generally reflects stronger parasympathetic (“rest & digest”) tone
- Lower HRV often reflects sympathetic dominance (“fight or flight”)

How to track it: use devices like Oura, Garmin, Whoop, Apple Watch, Ava, HeartMath (any HRV-capable tracker works).

Cycle note: HRV tends to be higher in the follicular phase and lower in the luteal phase, and research suggests ovarian hormones (especially progesterone) may influence this.

How to use HRV data:

- Look at trends, not one-day numbers
- If HRV drops for several days → you likely need more rest, food stability, gentler movement, and more downshifting practices



Short-Term Stress Hacks (Fast Nervous System Wins)

1) Box breathing (1–3 minutes)

Inhale 4 – hold 4 – exhale 4 – hold 4

This helps lower heart rate and reduce anxiety.

2) Hot/cold therapy

- Cold: face splash or face immersion activates the dive reflex → parasympathetic shift
- Heat: sauna, hot bath, heat pack tends to promote relaxation and recovery
- Start small: 30–60 seconds of cool water at the end of a shower is plenty.

3) Light exposure (day + night)

- Morning + daytime: get bright light exposure to regulate cortisol rhythm and energy
- Evenings: reduce blue light to protect melatonin
- Helpful tools: blue blockers, blackout shades, eye mask, dim lights, screen curfew

4) How you eat (not just what you eat)

To support “rest and digest”:

- eat seated, slow down
- chew thoroughly
- avoid screens while eating



Vagus Nerve Support (Build Vagal Tone)

Your vagus nerve is a major driver of the parasympathetic nervous system. Improving “vagal tone” supports relaxation, digestion, and recovery.

Try one per day:

1. **Deep breathing (longer exhale):** inhale 4, hold 2, exhale 6
2. **Cold exposure:** face splash or 30–60 seconds cool shower finish
3. **Gargling / humming / singing:** 1 minute gargling or 2–3 minutes humming/singing
4. **Meditation/mindfulness:** 10–15 minutes (guided is great - Insight Timer or similar)
5. **Yoga / tai chi:** even 10–15 minutes helps
6. **Laughter + social connection:** intentional time with people who feel safe
7. **Massage/acupressure:** neck/around ears/abdomen (or massage tools)
8. **Probiotics:** probiotic foods (yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi) or a quality supplement
9. **Posture:** upright/open posture + alignment work (Pilates/yoga)
10. **Intermittent fasting (optional):** only if appropriate for your body—many TTC clients do worse with fasting if it dysregulates blood sugar

Want a simple plan for your nervous system so you're not trying 20 things at once but only what is relevant for you?

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Long-Term Stress Resilience

1) Reduce sugar + alcohol (if you can)

Both can act like stressors

2) Sleep becomes non-negotiable

Aim for 7–9 hours, ideally before 11pm when possible.

3) Boundaries

- practice “no” / “not now”
- reduce to-do list
- limit doomscrolling/news
- stop internet debating
- ask for help

4) Movement, but not overtraining

You should feel better after exercise and the next day.

5) Pleasure and play matter (seriously)

Pleasure lowers cortisol and raises oxytocin.

- music
- creative expression
- laughter
- hugging/cuddling/pet therapy
- sex (partnered or solo)

Supportive Supplements

- Adaptogens: ashwagandha and holy basil
- Vitamin C
- Adrenal cocktail
- B-complex
- Magnesium glycinate
- Chamomile/passionflower/valerian root
- Cortisol manager



Always discuss any supplement regimen with your doctor first

So what's the next step?

If you are feeling rather stressed by all these habits and changes and don't know where to start - I get you and I've been there!

You don't have to figure out your stress management and hormone imbalances on your own.

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