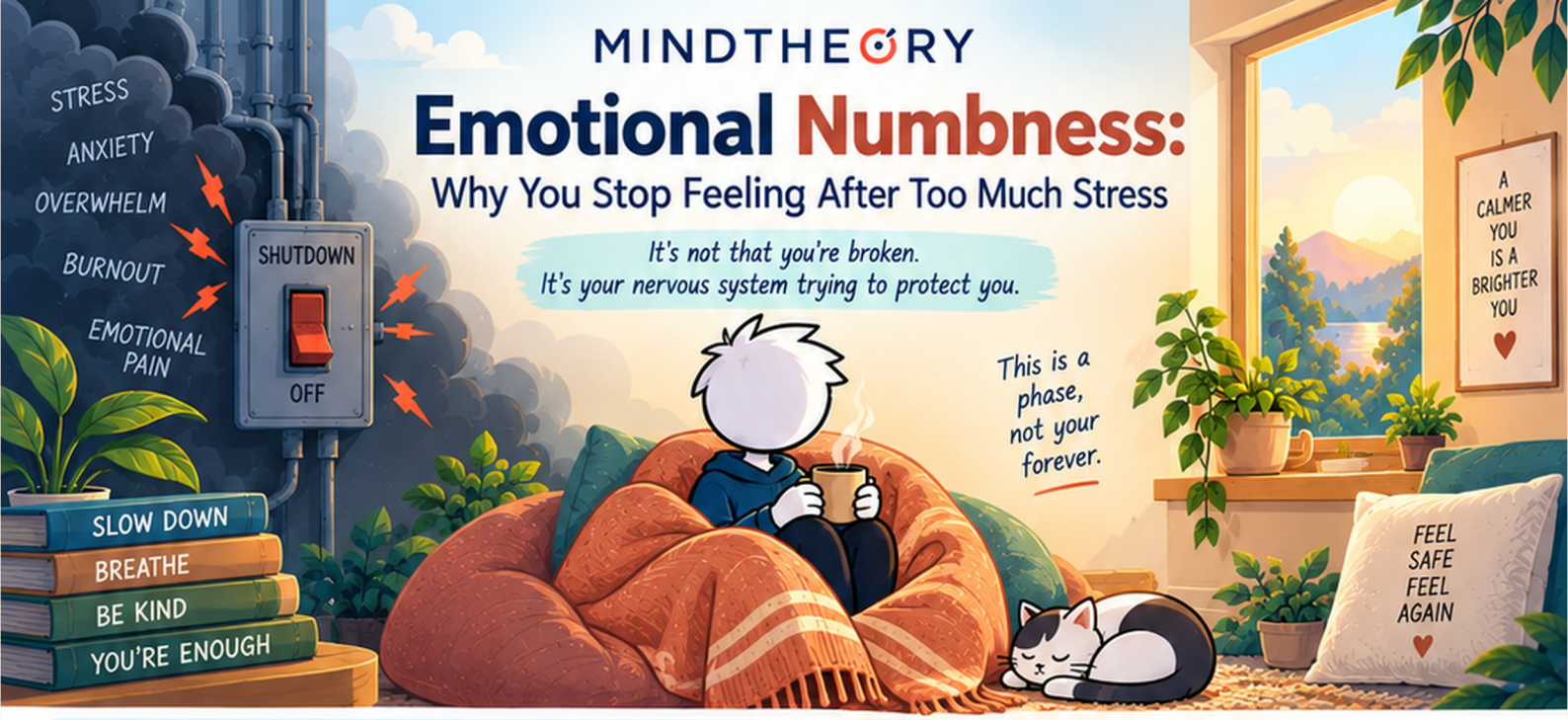
MINDTHEORY

# Emotional Numbness:

## Why You Stop Feeling After Too Much Stress

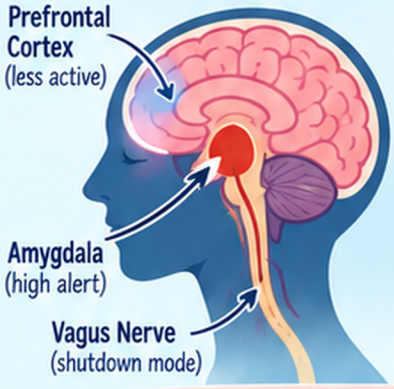
*It's not that you're broken.*
*It's your nervous system trying to protect you.*




## 1 The Biological Brake

### Your Nervous System Goes Into Shutdown

When stress becomes too much, your nervous system activates a protective state called **Dorsal Vagal Shutdown.**




### What Happens?

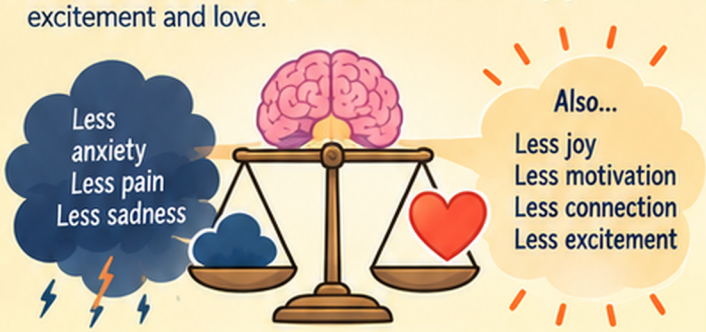
1. Your brain senses overwhelming stress or threat.
2. It reduces emotional activity to keep you safe.
3. You may feel numb, detached or "not like yourself" — this is a protective response, not a personal failure.

*Your brain isn't weak — it's doing its best to protect you.*

## 2 Key Insight

### You Can't Numb the Bad Without Numbing the Good

Your emotions are connected. When your nervous system dampens difficult emotions like anxiety, sadness or fear, it also reduces positive emotions like joy, excitement and love.




*Emotional numbness is the cost of protection, not a permanent state.*

## 3 4 Somatic Grounding Practices

Simple ways to signal safety to your nervous system

### 1 Use Temperature

Hold an ice cube, splash cold water on your face, or feel something cool.



*Temperature can quickly bring you back to the present.*

### 2 Feel Textures

Touch a soft blanket, rough fabric, a wooden surface or a textured object.



*Physical sensation anchors you in the here and now.*

### 3 Check In (1–10)

Pause and ask:
"How do I feel right now?"
Rate it from 1 (numb) to 10 (overwhelmed).
Just notice. No judgement.




*Awareness is the first step toward change.*

### 4 Reduce Your Load

Limit stressors, create routines, rest more and give yourself permission to slow down.



*A calmer environment helps your system feel safe again.*



If you feel numb for a long time, struggle to function, or have thoughts of self-harm, **please reach out to a mental health professional.** You don't have to do this alone.

*Healing isn't about feeling more all at once, but about feeling safe again.*

MINDTHEORY

UNDERSTAND • HEAL • GROW
A KINDER MIND • A BRIGHTER YOU