

HRV: The Stress Signal Already on Your Wrist

A plain-English guide to what your smartwatch has been trying to tell you.

Heart Rate Variability (HRV) is the tiny variation between your heartbeats. Higher, more variable = a nervous system that can shift between effort and ease. Lower, flatter = a system stuck in defense. HRV is not a grade. It is a signal. Watch the trend, not the number.

WHAT LOWERS HRV

- **Poor or short sleep**
Recovery happens overnight. Less sleep, lower HRV.
- **Alcohol**
Even one or two drinks suppresses HRV for 24 to 48 hours.
- **Chronic stress**
Unresolved load keeps the system in defense mode.
- **Overtraining**
Hard sessions with no easy days flatten the trend.
- **Illness or inflammation**
Your body is spending resources fighting something.
- **Dehydration**
Low fluids narrow the beat-to-beat variation.

WHAT RAISES HRV

- **Consistent sleep**
Same bedtime, same wake time. Consistency beats total hours.
- **Slow nasal breathing**
Five minutes of long exhales trains the recovery branch.
- **Zone 2 movement**
Easy, conversational effort. Walks, easy bike, easy jog.
- **Whole, unprocessed food**
Less inflammation to fight overnight.
- **Morning sunlight**
Ten minutes early sets sleep and recovery downstream.
- **Real human connection**
The nervous system co-regulates. Isolation lowers HRV.

THE 5-MINUTE PRACTICE · 4-6 BREATHING

Inhale 4 seconds through the nose. Exhale 6 seconds through the nose.

Five minutes, once a day. Do it before bed, before a hard meeting, or after driving.

The long exhale is the signal that tells your body it is safe to recover.

This is Practice #1 at rewiredholistics.com/practice