

## Taking the Fear out of teaching the Parasympathetic Response

How many of you have said to yourself—“self, what the heck is stimulating the para something or other for the bite release?” The *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention*<sup>®</sup> participant workbook on page 14 states that, when teaching the bite release “You may also want to use your finger in a vibrating motion to stimulate the person’s upper lip. This vibrating motion may result in a “parasympathetic response.”

Over my years of teaching I have heard people say—“this vibrating move stimulates the parasympathetic nerve that goes from one ear to the other.” I have also heard it described as, “this creates a tickling sensation that causes them to open their mouths.” Others have just chosen to ignore it and not teach it at all.

So let me try my Ms. Wizard impression by shedding some light on what “stimulating the parasympathetic response” actually accomplishes.

Many functions of our body are regulated by the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS). This would include, but not limited to, the heart, stomach and blood pressure. Most of the time we don’t even know what it is doing because for the most part it is involuntary.

The ANS is most important in two situations:

1. The *sympathetic* response otherwise known as “fight or flight,” that goes into effect when that saber tooth tiger is chasing you down main street to get you to your *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention*<sup>®</sup> class or
2. The *parasympathetic* response for non-emergencies that allow us to “rest” or “digest”

How this applies to the bite release is that when you use the vibrating motion on the individuals upper lip, you are stimulating the parasympathetic response. You are promoting a “rest” state or “relaxing the bite.”

For all you medical professionals out there who are saying to yourselves “self that is a rather simplistic explanation of the parasympathetic response.” You are indeed quite right. Nonetheless, I do hope this has given you food for thought when feeding the bite.

References:

Journal: Practical Procedures, Issue 5 (1995) Article 6, Dr. S. Bakewell, Addenbrook’s Hospital Cambridge

The Autonomic Nervous System, David L. Atkins, Prof. Of Biology, George Washington University

Medical Assistant Exam Help: [www.maexamhelp.com](http://www.maexamhelp.com), Autonomic Nervous System