

UNWINDFLOW

Five Minutes to a *Calmer* Nervous System

Three short practices for when your thoughts will not settle, and a week to try them in.



Two minutes of reading before you try anything.

Of all the pages in here, this is the one I would not skip.

What this is.

Three practices, each under two minutes. A page telling you which one to reach for and when. A tracker for the week after, so you have something real to look back on instead of a vague sense of whether it helped.

What this is not.

This is not treatment, and I am not a doctor or a therapist. Nothing in here treats or manages any diagnosed condition. If you are working with someone clinically, keep working with them, and treat this as something you do alongside that.

IF SOMETHING BIG COMES UP

Stop. Open your eyes. Look around the room and name three things you can see out loud. Put both feet flat on the floor and press them down. Doing that is the sensible thing, and the practices on page 9 are built around exactly that move.

If you are in crisis or you feel unsafe, please contact your local crisis line or someone who can be with you in person. Come back to this another time.

The whole guide is on this page, so nothing later comes as a surprise.

One idea.

Your system settles when you go toward something briefly and then come back, rather than when you push the feeling down. The coming back does the work.

Three practices.

- 01 **Let your eyes find the room.** About sixty seconds. The quickest of the three, and the one you can do with other people around.
- 02 **Make the out-breath longer.** About two minutes. The most studied of the three.
- 03 **The return.** About ninety seconds. The one that the other two are preparing you for.

One week.

Five minutes a day, then a page where you write down what happened, rather than how well it went.

That is all of it. The rest of these pages are the detail.

It is eleven at night. The list is done, the house is quiet, and you are lying there with your jaw set and your legs still ready to go somewhere.

Nothing is wrong. That is the part that is hard to say out loud to anyone.

You have read the things. You know the breathing exists. You know, in the way you know facts, that there is no tiger in the room and no deadline until Thursday.

Knowing it has never once made your shoulders drop.

So you do the thing you always do. You get up, you find something to be useful about, and you go to bed later than you meant to, because being busy is the only setting where the buzzing goes quiet.



Most calming advice asks for one big move. Take a deep breath. Let it go. Think about something pleasant.

That asks you to get from wherever you actually are, all the way to calm, in one go.

A body that is already braced reads that as one more demand, so it braces a little harder. That is why a deep breath sometimes makes your chest feel tighter instead of looser. Almost nobody warns you about that one.

There is a second reason, and it is more forgiving than the first.

The part of you that is buzzing at eleven at night does not run on facts. You can hand it a perfectly good argument and it will keep doing what it is doing, because the argument arrives in one part of you and the buzzing lives somewhere else.

That gap between knowing and settling is real, and it is documented. It is also why understanding something for years can change so little about how it feels.

BEFORE YOU TURN THE PAGE

When you have tried to calm down on purpose, what did you actually do?
Write the honest version, including the ones that involved a screen.

Try this now, sitting exactly as you are.

Notice something you are feeling right now. Anything. Tightness across the chest, a heaviness behind the eyes, restlessness in the legs. Find where it sits.

Stay with it for about five seconds. Let it be there while you look at it, without fixing it or breathing into it.

Now move your attention deliberately to something ordinary. The corner of the room. The weight of your feet. The sound of whatever is humming in the background.

Stay there for about ten seconds.

Then notice this: you went, and you came back.

That is the whole move, and I call it the return.

The going is the easy half. Everybody has done the going, most of us involuntarily, several times a day, and it is exhausting.

The coming back on purpose is what almost nobody practises, because while it is happening it looks like nothing at all is happening.

Every time you go a little way toward something and return under your own steam, your system gets a piece of information it has been guessing at. That you can go near this and come back.

Let your eyes find the room

About sixty seconds. Eyes open. Nobody can tell you are doing it.

HOW

Sit or stand however you already are. Let your eyes move around wherever you are, slowly, without looking for anything.

Let them stop when something catches them. A door frame, a plant, a mark on the wall. Notice where they stopped.

Rest there for a few seconds. Let your head turn with them if it wants to.

Then let them move on again. Do that four or five times.

If something shifts on its own, it tends to be small. A breath that arrives without you organising it. Your shoulders dropping a little. Your jaw letting go.

If nothing shifts, that is fine and it still counts. Write it down later.

WHY THIS ONE EXISTS

When you are braced, your eyes narrow their range, and they keep checking the same small area. Letting them travel and land is the opposite motion. It also puts your attention on something outside your own head. That is why it works on the nights when talking yourself down does not.

USE THIS WHEN

You are around other people, in a meeting, in a queue, in a car that is parked, or any time closing your eyes is not an option.

WHERE IT COMES FROM, HONESTLY

This is a standard practice in somatic therapy, meaning body-based therapy, where it has been used for decades. As a single practice on its own it has not been tested in a trial, so treat it as something widely used rather than something proven.

Make the out-breath longer

About two minutes. The most studied of the three.

HOW

Breathe in through your nose, normally. Do not make it big.

Breathe out through your mouth, slowly, for longer than the in-breath took. Roughly twice as long is a good target, and getting it exact does not matter.

Let the next in-breath arrive on its own. Do not pull it in.

Do that for about ten breaths.

If you feel light-headed or your chest tightens, you are working too hard at it. Make the in-breath smaller and the out-breath gentler, or stop and do practice one instead.

WHY THIS ONE EXISTS

Breathing out slowly is the one thing in here you can control on purpose. The rest of what your body is doing right now runs without asking you, and your out-breath has always been the exception.

USE THIS WHEN

You have two minutes alone. In the car before you go in. Sitting on the edge of the bed. Between two meetings with the door shut.

WHERE IT COMES FROM, HONESTLY

Slow breathing with a longer out-breath has a real research literature behind it, more than the other two practices here have. It is still a general finding about breathing rather than a promise about you.

The return

About ninety seconds. This is the one from page 6, done on purpose.

HOW

Sit somewhere you will not be interrupted. Eyes open or closed, whichever you prefer.

Bring to mind something that is bothering you today. Something ordinary and mid-sized. The unanswered message. Thursday. Leave the biggest thing in your life out of this for now.

Find where it shows up in your body. Chest, throat, stomach, jaw, somewhere behind the eyes. Get as specific as you can about the spot.

Stay there for about ten seconds. Keep it company, without trying to change it, understand it, or breathe it away.

Now move your attention on purpose to something neutral. Your feet on the floor. The temperature of the air. A sound in another room.

Stay there for about twenty seconds, until something in you actually arrives there.

Do that twice more. Go, come back. Go, come back.

Finish on the neutral thing, always. Never finish on the feeling.

TWO RULES THAT MATTER MORE THAN THE TECHNIQUE

Go smaller than you think you should. Ten seconds near something ordinary teaches your system more than two minutes near something enormous, and the enormous version is what makes people give up on this kind of work.

If you cannot come back, you went too far in. Open your eyes, name three things you can see, press your feet down, and stop for today. Nothing has gone wrong. Tomorrow, pick something smaller.

WHY THIS ONE EXISTS

The other two settle you. This one widens how long you can stay near a hard feeling before you have to escape it, and that is what changes how an ordinary Tuesday feels.

USE THIS WHEN

You have ninety seconds and privacy, and you are somewhere between fine and flooded. Skip it on the days you are already at the edge. Practice one and two are for those days.

WHERE IT COMES FROM, HONESTLY

Going toward something in small doses and deliberately coming back is a long-standing approach in body-based therapy, and the idea of working inside a range you can tolerate is widely taught. Both are working models rather than settled science, and this exact ninety-second version is mine. No study has tested it.

Five minutes a day, split however the day lets you.

WHERE YOU ARE	REACH FOR
People around, no privacy	Practice one
Two minutes and a closed door	Practice two
Ninety seconds, privacy, and you feel roughly okay	Practice three
Already at the edge, close to tears or tipping	Practice one, then practice two. Leave three.
No idea what you are feeling, just off	Practice one first. It tends to tell you.
Eleven at night, lying there	Practice two, then practice one with your eyes open in the dark

If you only ever do one thing from this whole document, make it the out-breath, on the drive home, before you walk in the door.

The honest page. I would rather you know now than find out in week three.

What it will probably do.

Give you a few minutes where your body is doing something different from what it did all day. When something does shift, it is usually smaller than you were hoping for. A breath that arrives on its own. Shoulders that come down half an inch.

What it will not do.

It will not remove whatever is causing the buzzing. Five minutes a day settles the state you are in, and it leaves the reason for that state exactly where it was.

That is worth saying plainly, because the gap between those two things is where this kind of work usually gets abandoned.

Days where nothing happens.

There will be some. A flat day still counts, and it is worth writing down, because the flat days turn out to be the useful ones when you read the week back.

A gentle reminder.

Nothing in here is a treatment for anything you have been diagnosed with, and none of it replaces care you are already getting.

Five minutes a day for seven days.

Fill it in with a pen as soon as you finish, while it is still fresh.

Write down what happened, rather than how well you did.

DAY	WHICH ONE	MINS	WHERE IT SAT IN MY BODY	WHAT HAPPENED WHEN I CAME BACK	0-10 BEFORE	0-10 AFTER
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						

THE 0 TO 10

Ask yourself one question before you start and again after: how tight is the grip of it right now, where 10 is completely gripped and 0 is not there at all. First number that arrives. Do not think about it.

Sit with the tracker page open and answer these.

Ten minutes, once, at the end of day seven.

Which practice did you reach for most often?

Which one did you quietly avoid?

That one is usually worth a second look, and it is often the third.

Did the place in your body stay in one spot, or did it move?

Look at your before and after numbers.

Ignore how big the drops were. Count how many days there was any movement at all.

Was there a day where nothing happened?

What was different about that day, in your life rather than in your practice?

And the one that matters most.

Was there a moment during the week, away from the practice, where you caught yourself doing the thing you have always done, and noticed it while it was happening?

If you wrote something on that last line, that is the most significant thing on this page. Noticing a pattern while you are inside it is the whole beginning of changing it.

There is a limit to what five minutes a day can do, and it is better said now than at the end of your week.

Something settles. Not everything, and not permanently. And at some point you may well bump into a particular thought, which is that you can bring the feeling down fairly reliably now and the thing causing it has not moved an inch.

That is the practice doing its actual job, which is getting you steady enough to look at what is underneath.

Underneath is usually a sentence. Something you concluded a long time ago, that made complete sense at the time, and that has been quietly running the show since. Most plans stall on that layer. Beliefs, feelings, and old nervous-system habits that nobody consciously chose.

That layer is what I work with, and it is a different job from the one this guide does.

If you want to look at it with someone

There is a free fifteen-minute call on my site. No pitch, and nothing to prepare. You tell me what has been stalling and I will tell you honestly whether this is something I can help with.

www.unwindflow.com/contact-us