

10 Habits in 10 Minutes



This World Mental Health day, why not take a moment to think about the tiny, everyday ways you can support yourself to feel your best.

In just the same way as showering, brushing teeth or getting dressed help us care for our appearance and hygiene, there are tiny habits we can build every day that help us care for our mental health.

For World Mental Health Day, the 10th day of the 10th month, we've put together a list of 10 simple habits, each of which can be completed in under 10 minutes.

You might be surprised at how many you can fit into your day, and even small actions like these can make a difference to your wellbeing.



1. Breathe deeply (from 1 min)

Slow diaphragmatic breathing lowers cortisol (a stress hormone) and activates your body's calming 'rest and digest' system.

How to do it:

Breathe in through your nose and let the breath travel all the way down to your tummy. Count to whatever number you can reach on the in breath. Breathe out slowly through your nose or mouth, ensuring the exhale takes 2 counts longer than the inhale. So if you breathe in for 4, breathe out for at least 6. Repeat for 1 – 2 minutes.

2. 60-Second Reset (1 min)

Each of us is born with an inner set of Resources that we use to meet our '12 Essential Needs'. One of these resources is our Observing Self – the neutral part of us that can observe our thoughts and feelings. Developing this resource is a skill, and it is best practiced in silence. Any time you remember to do so, pause for just 60 seconds—notice your breath, body or surroundings. Even these tiny mindful breaks can lower stress hormones and cue your nervous system to relax, making it easier to access your observing self and benefit from its wisdom during stressful times.

Want to learn more?

The Mental Health Toolkit is our flagship mental health training, where you'll learn all about your 12 emotional needs, your 9 resources, and how to use them more effectively to manage your mental health. Visit mnessexmind.org/training to book your place.



3. Move your body (from 1 min)

A 5–10 minute walk, a dance around the kitchen, or even stretching at your desk, activates powerful processes in your body that help regulate mood, improve energy and reduce anxiety.

How to develop a daily movement practice:

If you'd like to move more but are finding it hard to get started, it can help to set yourself a really small, realistic goal. This could be as little as one minute of movement, such as stretching, walking to make a cup of tea, or dancing to a song you enjoy. What matters most is building a habit you can return to, rather than setting a big goal that feels unmanageable and then giving up. Some days you might feel able to do more, and other days less, and that's okay. The important thing is keeping movement gentle and consistent, in a way that feels right for you.

4. Drink a glass of water (from 1 min)

Not drinking enough water can affect how your body copes with stress, leaving you feeling more tired or run down. Staying hydrated helps your body manage stress hormones and gives your liver and kidneys the support they need to work well. Because these organs rely on water to do their jobs, it can be especially helpful to drink enough fluids when life feels stressful.

Even when you're not under pressure, keeping hydrated is part of looking after your wellbeing. As a general guide, many people find that around two litres of water a day feels about right, but listen to your body and adjust for what you need.

How do I know I'm drinking enough?

Check the colour of your wee. You're aiming for a pale straw colour or lighter.

5. Listen to music (from 3 mins)

Music can be a really helpful way to support your mood. You might choose something calming if you'd like to unwind, or something more uplifting if you're looking for energy. If you're listening to relax, try closing your eyes and letting the sounds hold your attention. If you'd like a boost, you could move with the music, sing along, or do anything that feels enjoyable. Afterwards, take a moment to notice how you feel.

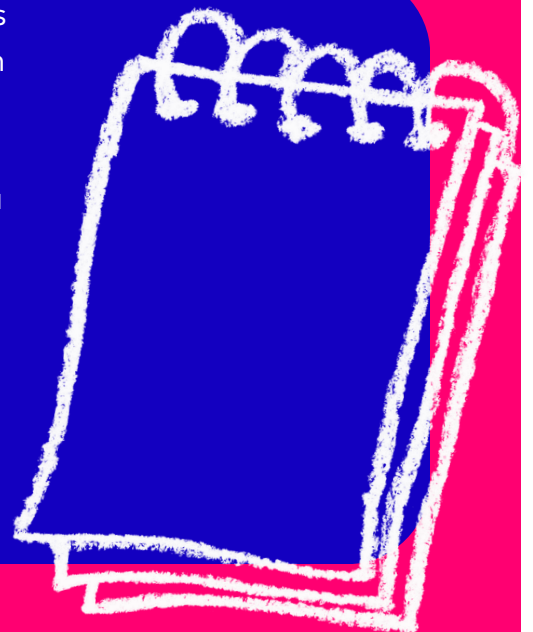
Want to boost this habit?

After noticing how you feel, take a moment to acknowledge yourself for taking action to support your mood. This is an achievement. Taking steps to care for your emotional wellbeing is important, and it's worth giving yourself credit for it.

6. Write what you're grateful for (from 5 mins)

When we're stressed, it's easy to focus on what's going wrong. A simple way to shift your attention is to notice three things you're grateful for. They don't have to be big, maybe a kind word from someone, a warm drink, or a moment of calm. You can write them down, say them out loud, or just think them.

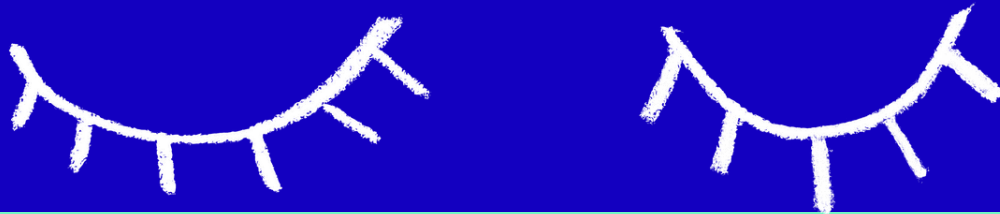
Taking a moment to do this regularly can help break patterns of overthinking and support your wellbeing.



7. Focus on your 5 Senses (1 min)

This is called the 54321 Technique. Notice: 5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste. It's a simple way to help manage feelings of anxiety and bring your attention back to the present when your mind is stuck in worry or replaying past events.

Using this technique in moments of stress can help you feel more grounded and calm.



8. Laugh or smile (less than 1 min)

Have you ever wondered: do we smile because we're happy, or do we feel happy because we smile? Evidence suggests it's both. Even a deliberate smile or a little laugh can give your mood a small lift.

How to do it intentionally:

Next time you're brushing your teeth, try letting your mouth form a smile and notice how it feels. You could also pair this with another self-care activity, like your gratitude practice, listening to music, or moving your body. Paying attention to this small act can help enhance the positive effects of these practices and give your mood a gentle boost.

9. Go outside in the morning (from 5 mins)

Letting natural daylight reach your eyes in the morning can be a simple way to help set your body clock and give you a gentle energy boost for the day. It works best if you limit bright or artificial light in the evening, so your body can learn to ‘power up’ in the morning and ‘wind down’ at night. Small changes like this can help support your sleep and overall wellbeing.

How to do it:

Try spending a few moments outside and let your eyes rest on the horizon. You could do this while having your morning tea or coffee, going for a short walk, or simply sitting quietly. During the winter months, or on dull days, spending a little longer outside can help enhance the benefits for your mood and wellbeing.

10. Intentionally relax your muscles (from 1 min)

You could try progressive muscle relaxation: gently tense your shoulders or jaw for around five seconds, then release. You can build on this by tensing and relaxing other parts of your body, moving from head to toe or vice versa.

This technique can be even more effective when combined with slow, calming breaths, helping you to feel more relaxed and present.

