

The Toolkit

Everything from the book you actually need to do, on paper, so you don't have to remember it from the audio.

You've listened to the science. This section is the part you print, keep on the fridge, or open on your phone when your body is running and your mind is already three meetings ahead. It contains the exercises from Chapter 10 as step-by-step cards, an emergency card for the moments when you're spiking right now, the 30-day reset on one page, and the trackers for each week. Nothing new. Just the book, made usable.

Your daily check-in

This is the foundation of Week 1 and you keep it for the whole 30 days. It takes 60 seconds, three times a day: when you wake up (before your phone), at lunch, and before bed.

The 60-second body check	
1. Stop	Sit or lie still. Eyes open or closed. Don't reach for anything.
2. Scan	Jaw. Shoulders. Chest. Stomach. Hands. Where is the tension? Don't fix it, just find it.
3. Breath	Is it high in the chest or low in the belly? Fast or slow? Are you holding it?
4. Heart	Steady, racing, or hard to feel at all?
5. Rate	Give your activation a number from 1 to 10 and write it down. That's it.

What the numbers mean

1 to 3	Ventral vagal. Calm, present, able to laugh, breathing low and slow. This is home.
4 to 6	Low-grade sympathetic. Jaw a little tight, mind slightly ahead of you, functional but not relaxed. Where most people live.
7 to 8	Fight or flight. Heart up, breathing shallow, short fuse, can't sit still. Use the emergency card.
9 to 10	Panic, or the opposite: shutdown. Numb, foggy, flat, can't think, can't move. That's dorsal vagal. It also counts as high activation.

A quick safety note: these are self-help practices, not medical care. If you have a diagnosed condition, or your symptoms are severe or persistent, check with a professional before starting.

The Exercises

Chapter 10, as cards. Read the card once, then do it.

1. The physiological sigh (fastest reset, under 30 seconds)	
What	Inhale through your nose. Before you exhale, take a second, shorter sniff on top to fill the lungs completely. Then exhale slowly through the mouth, at least twice as long as the two inhales combined.
How many	3 to 5 cycles. One round takes about 30 seconds.
When	Three times a day in Week 2 and after (morning, midday, evening), and any time you feel the number climbing.
You'll feel	The shoulders drop on the second or third exhale. If nothing changes, slow the exhale down further. The exhale is the part doing the work.

2. The dive reflex (for acute anxiety or the start of a panic attack)	
What	Fill a bowl with cold water and ice. Take a breath, hold it, and put your face in for 15 to 30 seconds. No bowl? Splash very cold water on your face, around the eyes and temples, or press a cold pack there.
When	When you're at 8 or above. Not a daily practice, an emergency brake.
You'll feel	Heart rate drops within seconds. Your mind can't override this one. It works below thought.
Careful	Skip this one if you have a heart condition, an arrhythmia, or an eating disorder. It lowers your heart rate fast. Use the exhale and grounding steps instead.

3. Humming, singing, gargling (direct vagus stimulation)	
What	Hum with your mouth closed until you feel the vibration in your throat and chest. Or sing, loudly. Or gargle salt water for 30 seconds.
How long	2 minutes a day. Attach it to something you already do: the shower, the car, brushing your teeth.
When	Daily from Week 4, or earlier if you like it.
You'll feel	Not much the first day. Keep going. The effect builds over a week.

4. Food as a signal (not a diet)	
Add	One fermented food a day (yogurt, kefir, kimchi, sauerkraut). One extra serving of vegetables. Omega-3s two or three times a week (fatty fish, walnuts, flaxseed).
Reduce	Pick the one thing doing the most damage, from your Week 1 audit: caffeine after noon, sugar and processed food, or alcohol. Cut it by half. Not all three. One.
Rule	Every meal is a message to your nervous system. Aim for most of them to say "you're safe".
Note	If you drink heavily or think you might be dependent, talk to a doctor before cutting alcohol down. Withdrawal can be dangerous and is not something to handle alone.

5. Rhythmic movement, ideally outdoors	
What	20 minutes minimum of walking, cycling, swimming, or any movement where left and right alternate. Outside if you can, near trees or water if you can.
When	Daily from Week 3.
Not	A workout. Intensity isn't the point. Rhythm and daylight are.

6. Sleep as the reset	
Same time	Bed and wake time within the same hour every day, weekends included.
Screens	Off 60 minutes before bed. Read, stretch, talk, or do nothing.
No	Caffeine after noon. Alcohol within three hours of bed.
Morning	Daylight in your eyes within the first hour of waking, 5 to 10 minutes outside. This sets tonight's sleep.
Room	Cool and dark.

7. Co-regulation (the original regulation)	
What	Time in person with someone who leaves you calmer. Phone away. Eye contact. Slow conversation. Nothing to achieve.
How much	Twice a week, from Week 4. Thirty minutes counts.
Also	Notice who does the opposite. You don't have to cut them off. Shorten it, space it out, or put something between you and them.

Emergency card: when you're spiking right now

Tear this out, screenshot it, whatever. This is for the moment in the car park, before the meeting, after the text.

Three steps, in order	
1. Exhale	Physiological sigh, five cycles. Long exhale through the mouth. Don't skip to step two before you've done five.
2. Cold	Cold water on the face, or a cold can, bottle, or ice pack against the eyes and temples for 30 seconds.
3. Ground	Feet flat on the floor. Name five things you can see, out loud or in your head. Then hum for one minute.
Then	Check your number. If it's still above 7, repeat. It usually isn't.

Keep this card where you can reach it fast. If panic attacks are frequent, severe, or stop you living your life, this card is a bridge, not a substitute for talking to a professional.

The 30-Day Reset on One Page

Each week adds to the last. Nothing is removed.

Week	Focus	Do every day	Do once this week
1	Awareness	3 check-ins (wake, lunch, bed). Write the number.	Food audit, sleep audit, people audit (trackers on the next pages).
2	Breath and food	Check-ins. Physiological sigh x3 (morning, midday, evening). One fermented food. One extra serving of vegetables.	Choose your one trigger to cut by half (caffeine after noon, sugar/processed, or alcohol).
3	Environment and movement	Everything above. 20 minutes of rhythmic movement, outdoors if possible. 60 minutes screen-free before bed.	Turn off non-essential notifications. Set one boundary with the most activating person. Add time with the most regulating one.
4	Consolidation	Everything above. Fixed bedtime routine. Morning daylight. 2 minutes of humming, singing, or gargling.	Two in-person, phone-away moments with safe people. Compare your Week 4 numbers with Week 1.

Time cost: about 10 minutes a day of intentional practice, plus the walk. If you miss a day, you haven't failed the reset. Do the next check-in. Consistency over a month beats perfection over three days.

Trackers

Type into these on a tablet, or print one set per week. Make as many copies as you like.

Daily check-in (1 to 10)

Day	Wake	Lunch	Bed	Sigh x3	Move 20 min	Note
Mon						
Tue						
Wed						
Thu						
Fri						
Sat						
Sun						

Sleep audit

Day	Bed time	Wake time	Quality 1 to 10	Screens off 60 min before?	Caffeine after noon?
Mon					
Tue					
Wed					
Thu					
Fri					
Sat					
Sun					

Food audit (Week 1: write, don't change)

Day	Morning	Midday	Evening	Drinks (coffee, alcohol, sugar)
Mon				
Tue				
Wed				
Thu				
Fri				
Sat				
Sun				

At the end of the week, circle the one thing that shows up most and costs you most. That's your Week 2 target.

People audit (after each significant interaction)

Who	How I felt after: calmer or more activated?	Number before	Number after

You're not judging anyone. You're collecting data. The person whose column keeps saying "more activated" is your Week 3 boundary. The one who keeps saying "calmer" is your Week 4 co-regulation.

Week 4: Before and After

Fill this in on day 30.

	Week 1 average	Week 4 average
Wake-up number		
Lunch number		
Bedtime number		
Sleep quality		
Nights I woke at 3 AM		
Times I snapped at someone		

What changed that I didn't expect:

The 30 days are the foundation, not the finish. Keep the three check-ins and the sigh. Everything else, keep what worked and drop what didn't. A regulated nervous system isn't a state you reach. It's a system that knows how to come back.

Notice what is here.

A repeatable check-in. Write a few words. You do not need to explain everything.

Start here: use this page once today, and return to it at morning, midday or bedtime if useful. The following pages are a gentler, optional companion to the exercises. They are practice aids, not a replacement for the audiobook or for medical care.

Date:

Time:

1. How would I describe this moment?

Circle any that fit: settled / tense / restless / tired / numb / mixed / not sure

2. What do I notice?

Name one sensation, or something around you if focusing on your body feels uncomfortable. Example: "My jaw feels tight" or "The room is noisy."

3. What was happening just before this?

A few words are enough. Example: "I opened a work email." You do not need to identify a cause.

4. What would be a manageable next step?

Example: "Pause before replying" or "Ask for five quiet minutes." Doing nothing extra is also an option.

These observations are descriptions, not a diagnosis. Feeling different from yesterday does not mean you have failed.

Try one small practice.

Use alongside Chapter 10. Choose one option, then notice how it feels for you.

Choose one option	
A. Gentle breathing	Sit comfortably with support. Let your breath move gently in and out, without forcing it or holding it. Count slowly if that helps. Start with a few comfortable breaths; continue only while it feels easy.
B. Gentle movement	Choose an easy walk or a comfortable seated movement. Begin with a minute or two at a pace that suits your body. You can stop sooner or simply rest.
C. A little connection	Choose someone you trust. You might ask: "Do you have a few minutes to talk? I could use some company." A call or message can be a practical starting point.

My choice today:

Before: what do I notice?

After: what do I notice?

Circle one: helpful / no clear change / uncomfortable / not sure

No change is useful information too. Stop if a practice causes dizziness, pain or distress. These optional practices do not replace medical care. For ongoing or concerning symptoms, seek professional advice.

Make the plan your size.

An optional, lighter way to explore the four weekly themes.

Choose one manageable action at a time. These are starting points, not a checklist to complete. Repeat a week if useful. Missing a day does not mean starting over.

Week 1 / Notice

Try the check-in on the first page of this companion. Example: "After lunch, I will write one thing I notice."

My small action:

Week 2 / Try

Choose a comfortable practice or one realistic food habit. Example: "I will make time to sit down for lunch."

My small action:

Week 3 / Make space

Choose a screen, movement or boundary change. Example: "I will mute non-essential notifications while eating."

My small action:

Week 4 / Keep what helps

Repeat something that felt useful. Example: "I will keep a short wind-down routine on evenings when I can."

My small action:

This simplified companion differs from the full schedule narrated in the book. It does not promise a reset within 30 days. Choose what fits your health, responsibilities and circumstances.

Alcohol note: if you drink heavily or may be dependent, seek medical advice before substantially reducing or stopping. Withdrawal can be dangerous.

Keep what is useful.

Return to this page after a week, or whenever you want to review your experience.

Dates / period:

1. What did I actually try?

Example: "A brief check-in after lunch on three days."

2. What did I notice, if anything?

Example: "I noticed tension earlier." "Nothing changed" is a valid answer.

3. What would I keep, change or stop?

Choose one adjustment. Example: "A shorter check-in feels more manageable."

4. What support or next step would help?

Example: "Ask for help with a task" or "Discuss persistent symptoms with a clinician."

References for the breathing and alcohol notes: NHS, "Breathing exercises for stress"; NIAAA, "Should You Cut Down or Quit?" These support specific claims, not every statement in the audiobook.