

COMPANION TO THE BRAIN LISTENS TO THE HEART

THE 30-DAY HEART-BRAIN PLAN

A printable, step-by-step guide to slow, resonant breathing. Ten to fifteen minutes a day, one small step each week, and a simple log to see what changes for you.



4 WEEKS

3 GUIDED AUDIOS

DAILY LOG

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ZEN BOOKS

Welcome. This is a practice, not a test.

For the next 30 days you will spend a few minutes a day breathing more slowly than usual. That is the whole method. The book explains why it works; this guide helps you do it, day after day, and notice what it does for you.

WHAT YOU NEED

- A chair, 10 to 15 quiet minutes and this guide.
- The three guided audios (scan the code on the last page).
- A pen. A watch, ring or app that shows heart rate is optional.

HOW THE PLAN WORKS

- **Week 1** · Notice and lengthen the exhale.
- **Week 2** · Slow down to six breaths a minute.
- **Week 3** · Find your own resonant pace.
- **Week 4** · Make it yours, in daily life.
- **Days 29-30** · Look back and choose what to keep.

THREE PROMISES WORTH KEEPING

1

Same time each day. Habit beats intensity: morning, or right after an existing routine.

2

Comfort first. Slow never means forced. If it feels strained, breathe a little faster.

3

Log it. Two minutes of notes each day is how you will know what changed.

Missed a day? Simply continue. The plan counts practice days, not calendar days, so you can never "fail" it.

YOUR PATH

WEEK 1
Notice

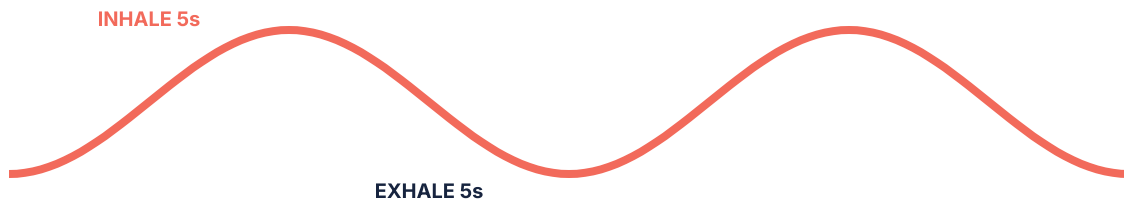
WEEK 2
Slow down

WEEK 3
Find your pace

WEEK 4
Make it yours

Why six breaths a minute?

Every time you breathe in, your heart speeds up a little. Every time you breathe out, the vagus nerve gently applies the brake and it slows down. This rise and fall is healthy: it is part of what heart rate variability (HRV) measures.



At about six breaths a minute (roughly 5 seconds in and 5 out), your breathing rhythm and your blood-pressure reflex line up, and the heart's natural rise and fall becomes larger and smoother.

WHAT HAPPENS RIGHT AWAY

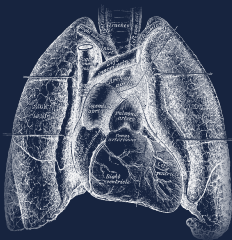
Pulse tends to drop and HRV rises within minutes, especially when the exhale is a little longer than the inhale. Many people feel calmer and more focused.

● ● ● ● MODERATE EVIDENCE

WHAT CAN BUILD WITH PRACTICE

Regular practice over weeks is linked to modest reductions in stress and anxiety and, in some people, blood pressure. Effects vary a lot from person to person.

● ● ● ● MODERATE EVIDENCE



What this plan does not promise. It will not "reset" your vagus nerve in a minute, replace medication or therapy, or guarantee a feeling. It trains a skill: slowing down on purpose. The Evidence Map that comes with the book shows exactly how strong the research is for each claim.

THE LOOP YOU ARE TRAINING

BREATHE OUT SLOWLY

A long, easy exhale



THE VAGUS BRAKES

The heart slows a little



THE BRAIN LISTENS

Calmer signals travel back up

Breathe safely

Slow, gentle breathing without breath-holds is safe for almost everyone. A few simple rules keep it that way.

ALWAYS

- Breathe gently, through the nose if you can.
- Keep the breath soft and quiet.
- Sit or lie comfortably.
- Go back to normal breathing whenever you like.

STOP IF YOU FEEL

- Dizziness or light-headedness.
- Tingling in hands, feet or lips.
- Chest discomfort or a racing heart.
- Air hunger or rising panic.

These usually mean you are breathing too deeply. Breathe normally; they pass.

ASK YOUR DOCTOR FIRST IF

- You have a heart rhythm problem or heart disease.
- You have asthma, COPD or another lung condition.
- You have panic disorder.
- You are pregnant.
- You take blood-pressure medication.

NEVER IN THIS PLAN

No breath-holds. Holding the breath, especially under water or while driving, can cause fainting. Nothing here asks you to hold your breath.

No fast or forced breathing. Rapid, powerful breathing techniques are a different practice with different risks.

SET UP FOR EACH SESSION

- Sit upright with your back supported.
- Feet flat, shoulders soft.
- One hand on the belly to feel it rise.
- Phone on silent, audio ready.

This guide is educational and does not replace medical advice. If you are being treated for anxiety, depression, high blood pressure or a heart condition, keep your treatment and tell your clinician you are practicing.

Take your starting point

Before day 1, take two minutes to note where you are. On day 30 you will repeat this and compare. Compare yourself only with yourself.

HOW TO TAKE YOUR RESTING PULSE



Sit quietly for two minutes. Place two fingers on the inside of your wrist below the thumb. Count the beats for 30 seconds and double it. If you use a wearable, read it at the same time of day, in the same position, every time. Its numbers are estimates and only comparable with itself.

Date and time

Resting pulse (beats per minute)

HRV from your device (optional)

Breaths in one minute, breathing naturally

Over the last week, how have you felt? Circle one number for each.

Stress (1 low, 10 high)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Calm (1 low, 10 high)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Sleep quality

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Energy

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Focus

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

Why are you doing this plan? What would you like to notice by day 30?

NOTICE AND LENGTHEN

This week you simply start to notice your breath and make the exhale a little longer than the inhale. It is the gentlest way in, and it already slows the heart.



5 MINUTES A DAY

AUDIO 1 · 5 MINUTES

● ● ● ● MODERATE EVIDENCE

YOUR DAILY PRACTICE

- 1 **Settle**
Sit tall but relaxed, feet on the floor, one hand on your belly. Breathe normally for a minute and count your breaths.
- 2 **Lengthen the exhale**
Breathe in for a count of 4 and out for a count of 6, slowly and quietly. Let the belly rise first.
- 3 **Follow the audio**
Use Audio 1 (5 minutes). It paces you at 4 seconds in and 6 seconds out.
- 4 **Log it**
Write minutes, how calm you felt before and after (1 to 10) and one sentence about what you noticed.

TIP

If 4 and 6 feel too long, try 3 and 5. The ratio matters more than the numbers.

THIS WEEK'S QUESTION

Notice: Where do you feel the breath? Does your shoulder or jaw relax on the exhale?

YOUR BREATH THIS WEEK



Notice and Lengthen: daily log

Calm: rate from 1 (tense) to 10 (very calm) before and after the session. Pulse: optional, by hand or device. Sleep: last night, from 1 (poor) to 5 (great).

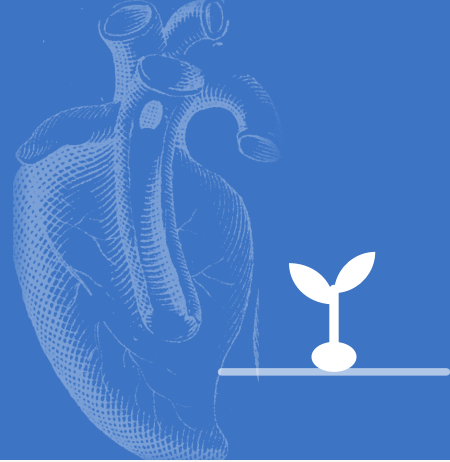
DAY	DATE	MINUTES	PACE	CALM	PULSE	SLEEP	WHAT I NOTICED
DAY 1	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 2	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 3	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 4	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 5	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 6	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 7	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	

END-OF-WEEK CHECK-IN

Which part of the practice felt most natural this week? What will you change next week?

SLOW TO SIX

Now you settle into about six breaths a minute, the pace at which the heart's natural rhythm grows largest for most adults. You also double your practice to ten minutes.



10 MINUTES A DAY

AUDIO 2 · 10 MINUTES

● ● ● ● MODERATE EVIDENCE

YOUR DAILY PRACTICE

- 1 **Warm up**
Two minutes of the week 1 breath: 4 in, 6 out.
- 2 **Settle at six**
Breathe 5 seconds in and 5 out (or 4 in and 6 out, if you prefer a longer exhale). Small, smooth breaths, not big ones.
- 3 **Follow the audio**
Use Audio 2 (10 minutes). Let the tones carry the timing so you can stop counting.
- 4 **Check your pulse**
If you have a wearable, look at your heart rate during the session: you will often see it rise and fall with each breath.

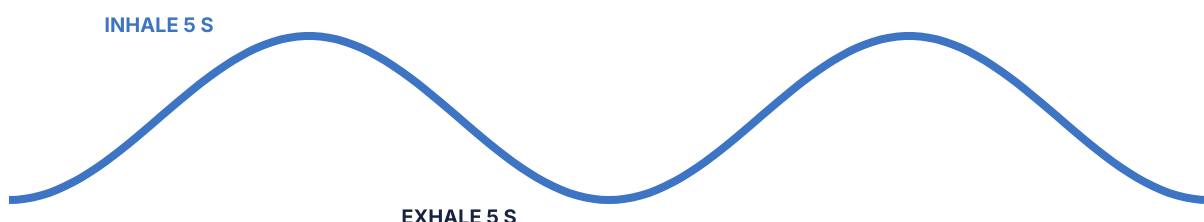
TIP

Feeling air hunger? Your breaths are too deep. Keep the same pace but make each breath smaller.

THIS WEEK'S QUESTION

Notice: Can you feel your heartbeat slow down on the exhale?

YOUR BREATH THIS WEEK



Slow to Six: daily log

Calm: rate from 1 (tense) to 10 (very calm) before and after the session. Pulse: optional, by hand or device. Sleep: last night, from 1 (poor) to 5 (great).

DAY	DATE	MINUTES	PACE	CALM	PULSE	SLEEP	WHAT I NOTICED
DAY 8	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 9	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 10	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 11	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 12	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 13	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 14	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	

END-OF-WEEK CHECK-IN

Which part of the practice felt most natural this week? What will you change next week?

FIND YOUR RHYTHM

Six is an average. Each person has a resonant pace somewhere between about 4.5 and 7 breaths a minute. This week you explore and choose the one that feels best for you.



10 TO 15 MINUTES A DAY

AUDIOS 2 AND 3

● ● ● ● MODERATE EVIDENCE

YOUR DAILY PRACTICE

- 1 Test one pace a day**
 Days 15 to 19: spend 3 minutes at each of two paces from the chart on the next page, then rest a minute between them.
- 2 Rate it**
 After each pace, note how easy and calming it felt (1 to 10). With a wearable, note which pace gave the largest rise and fall in heart rate.
- 3 Choose**
 Days 20 and 21: practice 10 to 15 minutes at the pace you rated best. That is your pace for week 4.
- 4 Stay comfortable**
 If a slow pace feels effortful, it is not your pace. Comfort is part of the answer.

TIP

No device? Choose by feel: the pace where breathing seems effortless and your mind settles fastest.

THIS WEEK'S QUESTION

Notice: Which pace feels like breathing on its own?

YOUR BREATH THIS WEEK



Pacing chart: find your resonant pace

Each row is one pace. The exhale is a little longer than the inhale (40:60), which most people find calmer. Test two paces a day, three minutes each, and rate them.

BREATHS / MIN	INHALE	EXHALE	ONE BREATH	EASE (1-10)	CALM (1-10)	HEART-RATE SWING (DEVICE)
7	3.4 s	5.2 s	8.6 s			
6.5	3.7 s	5.5 s	9.2 s			
6	4 s	6 s	10.0 s			
5.5	4.4 s	6.5 s	10.9 s			
5	4.8 s	7.2 s	12.0 s			
4.5	5.3 s	8 s	13.3 s			

HOW TO CHOOSE

- Pick the pace that is easiest and calmest.
- With a device, prefer the pace with the biggest smooth rise and fall in heart rate.
- If two are tied, choose the faster one: it is easier to keep up.

MY RESONANT PACE

_____ breaths a minute

Inhale _____ s · Exhale _____ s

Below about 4.5 breaths a minute most people start to strain, so this plan stops there. Use a metronome or breathing app set to your pace if you want to practice without the audios.

Find Your Rhythm: daily log

Calm: rate from 1 (tense) to 10 (very calm) before and after the session. Pulse: optional, by hand or device. Sleep: last night, from 1 (poor) to 5 (great).

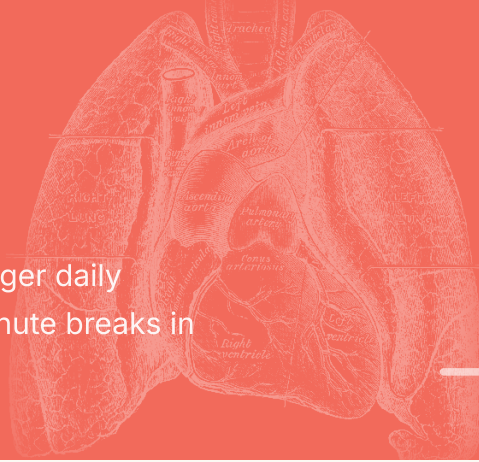
DAY	DATE	MINUTES	PACE	CALM	PULSE	SLEEP	WHAT I NOTICED
DAY 15	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 16	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 17	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 18	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 19	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 20	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 21	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	

END-OF-WEEK CHECK-IN

Which part of the practice felt most natural this week? What will you change next week?

MAKE IT YOURS

This week the practice becomes yours: a longer daily session at your own pace, plus short one-minute breaks in the moments that usually wind you up.



15 MINUTES A DAY

AUDIO 3 • 15 MINUTES

● ● ● ● PRELIMINARY

YOUR DAILY PRACTICE

- 1 Daily session**
15 minutes at your chosen pace, with Audio 3 or on your own.
- 2 Add attention**
During the session, rest your attention on the area of your chest and on the feeling of the exhale. When the mind wanders, return without judgment.
- 3 One-minute breaks**
Two or three times a day, before a meeting, a hard email or the drive home, take six slow breaths with a long exhale.
- 4 Optional biofeedback**
If you use an HRV app, try a few sessions with live feedback. Treat its scores as a guide, not a grade.

TIP

Tie the one-minute breaks to things that already happen: the kettle, a red light, closing the laptop.

THIS WEEK'S QUESTION

Notice: Do the one-minute breaks change how the next hour goes?

YOUR BREATH THIS WEEK



Make It Yours: daily log

Calm: rate from 1 (tense) to 10 (very calm) before and after the session. Pulse: optional, by hand or device. Sleep: last night, from 1 (poor) to 5 (great).

DAY	DATE	MINUTES	PACE	CALM	PULSE	SLEEP	WHAT I NOTICED
DAY 22	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 23	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 24	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 25	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 26	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 27	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	
DAY 28	date	min	breaths/min	before · after	before · after	1 2 3 4 5	

END-OF-WEEK CHECK-IN

Which part of the practice felt most natural this week? What will you change next week?

Three tools for everyday moments

Use these during the plan and long after it. Each one takes a minute or a few.

THE ONE-MINUTE RESET

Six breaths, about 4 seconds in and 6 out. Use it before a hard conversation, a presentation or when you notice your jaw clenching. It is short enough to do with your eyes open, anywhere.

60s

THE WIND-DOWN

Ten minutes at your resonant pace in bed or just before, lights low, no screen. Studies on sleep are still small and short, so treat it as an experiment and see what your log says. ● ● ● ● PRELIMINARY



THE BEFORE-AND-AFTER CHECK

Take your pulse for 30 seconds, do three minutes of slow breathing, and take it again. Seeing the number drop is a quick, personal demonstration of the vagal brake at work. ● ● ● ● HIGH CONSENSUS



WHAT ABOUT COLD WATER, HUMMING OR EAR GADGETS?

They are often sold as instant vagus "resets". The evidence doesn't support the effects they are marketed with. Slow breathing is free, safe and better studied. ● ● ● ● NOT SHOWN

✂ CUT OUT AND KEEP IN YOUR WALLET

MY ONE-MINUTE RESET

1. Drop the shoulders.
2. In through the nose: 1, 2, 3, 4.
3. Out slowly: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.
4. Six times. Then carry on.

MY PACE

___ breaths a minute
In ___ s · Out ___ s

Stop if dizzy or tingly.

Thirty circles

Color in a circle every day you practice and write the minutes. Watching the circles fill up is part of the habit.

1 min ____	2 min ____	3 min ____	4 min ____	5 min ____	6 min ____
7 min ____	8 min ____	9 min ____	10 min ____	11 min ____	12 min ____
13 min ____	14 min ____	15 min ____	16 min ____	17 min ____	18 min ____
19 min ____	20 min ____	21 min ____	22 min ____	23 min ____	24 min ____
25 min ____	26 min ____	27 min ____	28 min ____	29 min ____	30 min ____

WEEK 1

WEEK 2

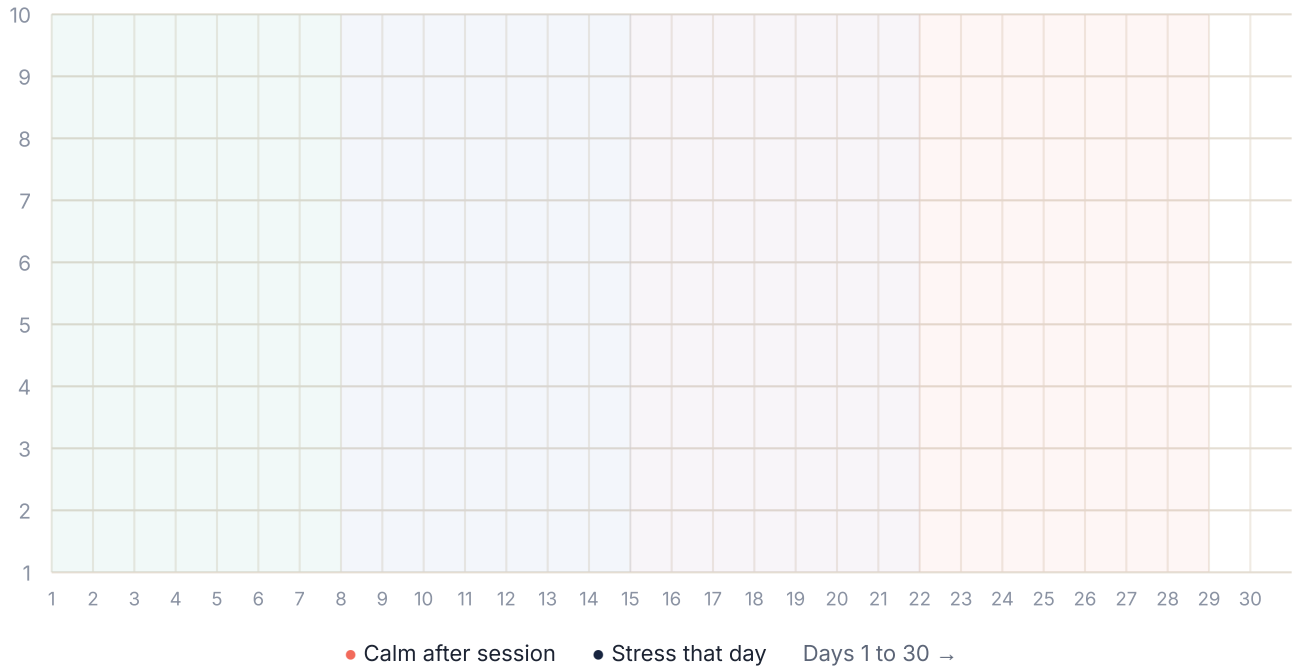
WEEK 3

WEEK 4

REVIEW

Your 30-day chart

Each day, put a dot for your calm score after the session (coral) and, if you like, a dot for stress that day (navy). Join the dots at the end of each week.



READING YOUR CHART

Look for the trend, not single days. A bad night's sleep or a hard day will show up. That is normal and is not a sign the practice is failing.

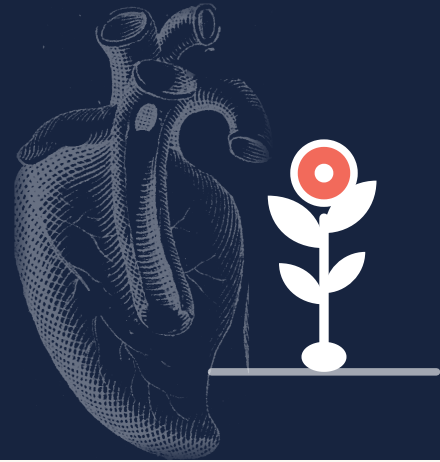
RESTING PULSE (OPTIONAL)

Day 1 _____ · Day 10 _____

Day 20 _____ · Day 30 _____

LOOK BACK, CHOOSE

Repeat your Day 0 check and compare. Then decide what to keep. Thirty days is long enough to see a pattern, and short enough to change course.



MEASURE	DAY 0	DAY 30	CHANGE
Resting pulse			
HRV (device, optional)			
Breaths per minute, natural			
Stress (1-10)			
Calm (1-10)			
Sleep quality (1-10)			
Energy (1-10)			
Focus (1-10)			

WHAT CHANGED FOR ME

WHAT I WILL KEEP

- ☐ Daily session: ____ min at ____ breaths/min
- ☐ One-minute resets during the day
- ☐ Wind-down before sleep
- ☐ Something else: _____

Common questions

I feel dizzy or tingly.

You are breathing too deeply, not too slowly. Keep the pace but make each breath smaller and quieter. If it continues, stop and breathe normally.

My mind won't stop wandering.

That is part of the practice. Each time you notice and come back is a repetition, like lifting a weight.

I don't feel anything.

Many effects are subtle and show up in the log before you feel them. Check your before-and-after calm scores and your pulse.

Six breaths a minute feels too slow.

Start at 7 or even 8 and slow down over the weeks. Week 3 helps you find a pace that suits you.

My HRV number went down.

Single readings jump around with sleep, alcohol, illness and stress. Look at the weekly trend and compare only with the same device.

Can I do it lying down?

Yes. Sitting upright keeps you more alert; lying down is ideal before sleep.

Do I need a device or app?

No. Everything in this plan works with the audios, a clock and a pen. A device simply adds a window on what your heart is doing.

Can this replace my treatment?

No. It can be a useful complement. Keep your medication and therapy, and tell your clinician what you are doing.

Listen along

Scan the code with your phone camera to open the three guided sessions. Each one is voice-guided with soft tones that mark the inhale and the exhale.

QR CODE
(added when
the audio page is live)

1

Lengthen the Exhale · 5 min

Week 1 · 4 seconds in, 6 out

2

Slow to Six · 10 min

Week 2 · six breaths a minute

3

Resonance · 15 min

Week 4 · six breaths a minute, with attention

AFTER THE 30 DAYS

Keep a daily session that fits your life, even five minutes. Re-read Chapter 13 of *The Brain Listens to the Heart* for the full graduated protocol, and use the Evidence Map to judge any new technique you come across.

Evidence levels follow the book's Evidence Thermometer (High consensus, Moderate evidence, Preliminary, Not shown), based on the author's review of the research up to October 2026. This guide is educational and is not medical advice. Stop any exercise that makes you feel unwell and consult a health professional if you have a medical condition.

Illustrations: Andreas Vesalius, *De humani corporis fabrica* (1543), and an anatomical engraving of the heart (1686), both from Wellcome Collection; Henry Gray, *Anatomy of the Human Body* (1918). All public domain.

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