



# Short Self-Guided Exercises for Purpose, Mindset, and Balance

**Ikiglow's Approach:** The following is a curated list of short, self-guided exercises aligned with Ikiglow's pillars of Purpose, Mindset, and Balance. Each exercise is designed to be delivered via text, visuals, or audio on a public website (no login) and as reusable mobile app widgets. They are concise (many 1–5 minutes) yet impactful, with options to extend to 10+ minutes when deeper practice is desired. The tone is calm, reflective, and empowering – suited for young professionals seeking clarity and growth in a gentle, human-centered way.

## Box Breathing (Four-Square Breathing)

**Description:** A four-step breathing technique (inhale, hold, exhale, hold, each for equal counts – often 4 seconds) that creates a steady, rhythmic breath pattern <sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup>. By breathing “in a box” of even counts, you regulate your breath and engage the parasympathetic nervous system, bringing immediate calm <sup>2</sup>.

**Main Purpose:** To quickly reduce stress and anxiety and increase focus by restoring a relaxed breathing rhythm <sup>2</sup>. This exercise provides an almost instant sense of calm and can even help lower heart rate and blood pressure over a few minutes <sup>3</sup>.

**Suggested Format:** Text or simple visual guidance (for example, an animated square or breathing bar) to cue the 4-4-4-4 pattern. Audio can be used (a voice counting or a soft chime for each step), though it's simple enough to practice with written prompts. The user can do it anywhere – sitting at a desk or on a commute – with minimal instruction.

**Ideal Duration:** ~2–5 minutes for a quick reset (several cycles of the “box” breath; even one minute of box breathing can have a calming effect <sup>4</sup>). It can be extended to 10 minutes or more for deeper relaxation, especially if used as a mindfulness practice before sleep or during high stress <sup>5</sup>.

## 4-7-8 Breathing (Relaxing Breath)

**Description:** A guided breathing pattern where you inhale for a count of 4, hold your breath for 7, and exhale for 8. This technique, rooted in yogic pranayama, helps **slow down the breath** and lengthen exhalation <sup>6</sup>. The prolonged exhale in particular triggers the body's relaxation response, engaging the calming parasympathetic nervous system <sup>7</sup>.

**Main Purpose:** To calm the mind and body, reduce anxiety, and help ease into sleep. The 4-7-8 method is known to **lower stress and even improve sleep quality** by quieting the nervous system and slowing the heart rate <sup>8</sup>. Many people use it to combat anxious “fight-or-flight” feelings or as a wind-down before bed <sup>9</sup>.

**Suggested Format:** A simple text or audio prompt can guide the counts (“Inhale...2...3...4, hold...2...3...,” etc.). This exercise is well-suited to audio for hands-free practice (especially at bedtime with eyes closed). A visual countdown timer or animation (e.g., a circle expanding and contracting) could also help users follow the 4-7-8 rhythm.

**Ideal Duration:** About 1–5 minutes. Even **a few cycles** (say, 4 repetitions) of 4-7-8 breathing – taking only a minute or two – can induce calm <sup>9</sup>. For a deeper effect (for instance, if struggling with insomnia), users

can continue for 5–10 minutes until the body relaxes fully. It's recommended to start with a shorter practice to avoid lightheadedness, then extend as comfortable.

## Coherent Breathing (Resonance Breathing)

**Description:** A slow, deep breathing exercise aimed at achieving about **five breaths per minute** – roughly a 6-second inhale and 6-second exhale <sup>10</sup> <sup>11</sup>. By lengthening each breath, you create a gentle flow that balances the autonomic nervous system. This technique is often used in yoga/meditation and has been shown to increase heart-rate variability (a marker of calm and balance).

**Main Purpose:** To reduce stress and anxiety and bring the body into a state of equilibrium. Coherent breathing stimulates the vagus nerve and “puts the brakes” on the stress response, leading to a calmer heart rate and lower anxiety levels <sup>12</sup> <sup>13</sup>. It's a simple way to foster mental clarity and an overall sense of **balance** when feeling overwhelmed <sup>10</sup>.

**Suggested Format:** A visual or audio pacer can be very helpful (for example, a breathing orb or a chime every 6 seconds) to guide the slow inhales and exhales. Text instructions can encourage the user to count (“inhale...1...2...3...4...5...6; exhale...1...2...3...4...5...6”). Since this is about a consistent rhythm, a calm background sound or gentle guidance supports the user in maintaining the pace.

**Ideal Duration:** **5 minutes** is a common practice length to achieve a noticeable calming effect <sup>14</sup>. Even 1–2 minutes can help in a pinch, though the impact grows with a slightly longer session. For a deeper session, it can be extended to **10–20 minutes** of continuous slow breathing <sup>15</sup> – practitioners often work up to 20 minutes daily for maximum benefit.

## 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique

**Description:** A classic grounding exercise that uses your five senses to bring you back to the present moment. You consciously notice **5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel (touch), 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste** <sup>16</sup>. By actively observing your environment in this structured way, you shift focus out of anxious thoughts and into the here-and-now.

**Main Purpose:** To alleviate anxiety or panic and prevent rumination by **anchoring your mind in the present** <sup>17</sup> <sup>18</sup>. This sensory exercise interrupts racing thoughts and induces mindfulness; users often feel more stable and calm after cycling through their senses, as it grounds them in reality and away from worry. It's essentially a quick reset for moments of overwhelm.

**Suggested Format:** This can be delivered as a **guided checklist** in text or audio. For example, on screen it might prompt: “Look around and name five things you see...,” then “four things you can feel,” and so on. An interactive format could even allow the user to check off each item as they identify it. Audio guidance is very effective too – a soothing voice can slowly walk the user through each of the five steps, with short pauses in between.

**Ideal Duration:** Typically **2–5 minutes** to complete the full countdown of senses. It can be done fairly quickly (in under 2 minutes) if needed – for instance, mentally naming the items in a tense moment – or stretched to 5+ minutes by lingering on each sense for a few deep breaths. Users can repeat the cycle or focus more on one sense if they need extra grounding in that area.

## One-Minute Mindful Break (Micro Meditation)

**Description:** A super-short meditation exercise (around 60 seconds) where you pause, close your eyes (if comfortable), and focus on your breath or bodily sensations. Even in one minute, you deliberately center

your attention: for example, feeling the inhale/exhale, scanning a few body parts, or listening to the ambient sounds without judgment <sup>19</sup> <sup>20</sup> . This acts as a “mental reset button” during a busy day.

**Main Purpose:** To rapidly **reset your mindset and reduce stress** by injecting a moment of calm into your routine. Research suggests even a one-minute meditation can improve focus, decision-making, and energy levels by breaking the cycle of stress and overthinking <sup>19</sup> <sup>20</sup> . It’s a quick way to step back, breathe deeply, and gain clarity when you’re feeling overwhelmed or scattered.

**Suggested Format:** Ideally an **audio snippet** or in-app timer that gently guides the user for 60 seconds (e.g., “Take a deep breath... let go of any tension...”) and perhaps a soft bell at the end. Alternatively, text instructions can encourage the user to count, breathe, or do a mini body-scan for one minute. Because this exercise is so short, a simple format works best – the key is to prompt the user to actually take that mindful minute.

**Ideal Duration: 1 minute** is the core practice – its beauty is that it’s easily fit into any schedule. Even such a brief pause can be “incredibly effective” at shifting your mental state <sup>19</sup> . Of course, it can be extended to 2–3 minutes or longer if time permits, but the goal is that **anyone can find 60 seconds** to breathe and recenter. Regular one-minute breaks throughout the day can cumulatively have a big impact.

## Guided Visualization (“Calm Scene” Imagery)

**Description:** A short **guided imagery** exercise where you visualize a peaceful, positive scene in detail. For example, the user might be led to imagine sitting on a warm beach or walking in a tranquil forest – engaging all their senses to truly “be” in that calming place. This type of visualization is essentially a form of gentle meditation that uses imagination to induce relaxation <sup>21</sup> .

**Main Purpose:** To reduce stress and anxiety by harnessing the mind’s imagery for relaxation. Guided visualization (also called guided imagery) triggers the body’s relaxation response – slowing breathing, lowering heart rate and blood pressure – by **dwelling on a positive mental image** and letting go of worry <sup>21</sup> <sup>22</sup> . It can also boost mood and well-being; studies show it alleviates stress and anxiety, especially when the scenes involve nature or personal comfort <sup>22</sup> <sup>23</sup> . In short, it’s a way to **find calm and safety in your mind** when external circumstances are chaotic.

**Suggested Format: Audio** is particularly effective here – a gentle narrative voice can describe the scene and prompt the user’s sensory imagination (“Feel the sand beneath you...hear the waves...”). This could also be a short written script on the screen for the user to read slowly, but an audio or visual experience (perhaps an illustration of a serene landscape) adds to the immersion. Soft background sounds (like ocean waves or birds chirping) can enhance the effect.

**Ideal Duration: 3–5 minutes** for a quick visualization that leaves the user feeling refreshed. In a public website/app setting, a 3-minute guided imagery session can be sufficient to noticeably reduce tension. If the user has more time or is using it before sleep or during a break, it can be extended to **10+ minutes** by adding more descriptive depth or allowing longer pauses for the user to explore the scene in their mind. The exercise is flexible – even a brief 2-minute visualization can be valuable, while a longer one can become a mini-escape whenever needed.

## Thought Reframing Exercise (Cognitive Reframe)

**Description:** A quick cognitive exercise drawn from CBT techniques where the user identifies a **negative or unhelpful thought** and actively rephrases it into a more positive or realistic one. For example, “I messed up everything in that project” might be reframed as “I made a mistake, but I learned from it and some parts went well.” By writing down the anxious thought and then a kinder, more balanced rebuttal, the user can literally change their mindset on the spot <sup>24</sup> <sup>25</sup> .

**Main Purpose:** To disrupt negative self-talk and reduce anxiety by **shifting perspective**. This exercise trains the mind to challenge cognitive distortions and replace them with constructive narratives <sup>25</sup>. The result is often an immediate relief in stress level – as one Healthline author noted, a simple 5-minute reframing practice “quieted [her] racing thoughts” and lifted the fog of anxiety, essentially shutting down the cycle of worry for the day <sup>24</sup> <sup>26</sup>. In essence, reframing builds a resilient, growth-oriented mindset in place of self-criticism.

**Suggested Format:** Text-based interactive format works well: for instance, present a text box labeled “Write down a stressful thought bothering you.” Then a second prompt: “Now, imagine a friend had this thought – what would you say to help reframe it?” or offer guiding questions to lead the user to a healthier thought. This could also be a template with two columns (Thought → Reframe). It’s essentially a mini journaling exercise, so the UI should be clean and supportive. An audio version could be a narrator asking the user to reflect and rephrase internally, but writing it out is often more effective for clarity.

**Ideal Duration:** **Approximately 5 minutes** is usually enough to pick one troubling thought and walk through a reframing process <sup>24</sup>. It can be even shorter if done mentally (some do a quick version in the moment of stress). Alternatively, users might spend 10–15 minutes to deeply challenge multiple thoughts or journal more extensively – but the power of this exercise is that **even a single 5-minute thought challenge can meaningfully shift one’s mood** <sup>24</sup>. As a daily practice, it’s brief but cumulative in its benefits.

## Self-Compassion Break (Kindness Pause)

**Description:** A brief mindfulness and self-compassion exercise developed by Dr. Kristin Neff. It involves three steps, typically done in a moment of stress or self-criticism: (1) **Mindfulness** – acknowledge that you’re suffering or stressed (“This is a moment of suffering” or “This hurts”) <sup>27</sup>. (2) **Common Humanity** – remind yourself that struggle is part of life and you’re not alone (“I’m not alone; everyone struggles sometimes”) <sup>28</sup>. (3) **Self-Kindness** – extend kindness to yourself, e.g. by saying “May I be kind to myself” or any supportive phrase you need (“I will be patient with myself”) <sup>29</sup>. Often people place a hand on their heart during this exercise to reinforce the warmth.

**Main Purpose:** To cultivate **self-compassion and emotional resilience** by responding to your own difficulties with care instead of judgment. This practice helps reduce harsh self-criticism and soothes emotional pain; it has the effect of calming the mind and heart when you’re being hard on yourself <sup>30</sup> <sup>31</sup>. In moments of failure, stress, or insecurity, the Self-Compassion Break shifts your mindset to one of supportive friendship toward yourself, which research shows can decrease anxiety and improve overall well-being. It’s a way of saying “It’s okay, I’m human and I can give myself the comfort I need.”

**Suggested Format:** Often delivered as a **guided audio** (since it’s like a short meditation) with a gentle voice prompting each of the three statements and a pause for the user to repeat or feel the meaning. However, it can also be a text script or infographic that the user reads and follows internally. The tone must be very soft and empathetic. For instance, the widget could display each phrase one-by-one, prompting the user to fill in their specific situation (“Identify something stressing you... Now say to yourself: ‘This is a moment of suffering...’” and so on).

**Ideal Duration:** **About 5 minutes** in a guided format is typical to fully walk through the three steps and give the user a moment to reflect on each <sup>32</sup>. With practice, it can be done even quicker – in just 1–2 minutes internally – whenever a tough moment arises <sup>33</sup>. For a deeper experience (for example, built into a longer meditation session), it could extend to 10 minutes by adding more silence or additional affirmations. The key is that even a short compassion break can instantly soften the intensity of stress and can be used “on the spot” during a hectic day.

## “Three Good Things” Gratitude Practice

**Description:** A simple gratitude exercise where the user **lists three things that they are grateful for** or that went well in their day. These can be big (e.g., “Got a promotion”) or very small (“Had a tasty lunch, the sun was warm today”). The point is to intentionally focus on positive aspects of life, which we often overlook. Writing down just three positive things has been shown to boost happiness and emotional well-being <sup>34</sup> <sup>35</sup> .

**Main Purpose:** To foster a more positive mindset and counteract the brain’s tendency to dwell on stressors. Regular gratitude practice is linked to **reduced stress and improved mental health**, including higher optimism and resilience <sup>36</sup> . By focusing on “three good things,” users shift attention from negative events to uplifting ones, which can improve mood in the short term and train a more grateful, content outlook in the long term <sup>34</sup> <sup>37</sup> . This exercise specifically cultivates appreciation and can break the cycle of daily anxiety by reminding individuals of what’s going right.

**Suggested Format: Text input** is ideal – for instance, a daily widget where the user can quickly jot down three bullet points (“Today I am grateful for... 1) \_\_ 2) \_\_ 3) \_\_”). It could also be a journal-style interface or even a public feed (if sharing is encouraged, though likely this is private). No audio is really needed here, though a gentle prompt or notification (“Time to reflect on 3 good things”) could cue the practice. The key is simplicity: it should feel easy to do in a couple of minutes, perhaps with placeholder examples or a cheerful design.

**Ideal Duration: 1-5 minutes.** In practice, writing three items might take just a minute or two – in fact, studies found that listing three things is sufficient to get benefits if done consistently <sup>35</sup> . Users can certainly spend longer (you can encourage adding a sentence about *why* they are grateful for each item to deepen the effect, turning it into a 5-10 minute reflection). But as a micro-exercise, it’s effective even in brief form. Doing this daily (often at morning or bedtime) yields the best results in terms of improved outlook.

## One-Minute Reflection Journal (Micro-Journaling)

**Description:** A **very short journaling exercise** using a small number of prompts (usually 1–3 prompts) to guide self-reflection. For example, a widget might present three quick questions such as: “*How am I feeling right now?*” “*What is one thing I want to focus on today?*” “*What’s one thing I learned or appreciated today?*” The user takes a minute to jot down a sentence or two for each. This “micro-journal” captures key thoughts without requiring a big time commitment, making reflection accessible even on busy days.

**Main Purpose:** To promote **self-awareness and clarity** by regularly checking in with oneself in writing. Even brief journaling can sharpen focus, turn attention inward, and help process feelings in a constructive way <sup>38</sup> . The act of writing (even just a few lines) has been shown to decrease negative thoughts and enhance positive thinking by forcing a bit of mindfulness and structure onto our internal chatter <sup>38</sup> . In essence, this exercise helps users pause and make meaning of their experiences, supporting emotional balance and a sense of purpose in daily life. Over time, these tiny reflections can illuminate patterns and growth.

**Suggested Format:** A **text-based form** or journal interface in the app/website. It could show one prompt at a time with a field to type a response, or all prompts at once. The prompts might be fixed daily or randomly rotating from a set (to keep it fresh). Examples of single-question formats: “Write one line about what gave you energy today,” or “Answer this: ‘Today, I...’” The design should be minimalist and calming (perhaps a notepaper aesthetic or just clean UI) to encourage an uncluttered mind while writing. (Audio isn’t typical here, but a user could optionally dictate their answer using voice input in a mobile app.)

**Ideal Duration: 1-3 minutes.** This truly is a bite-sized practice – the idea is that writing a few quick lines can be done in a minute or two. That said, users can certainly extend it: if a prompt resonates, writing for 5–10

minutes is beneficial too. But the core format should remain doable in under 5 minutes so that it can become a consistent daily habit. Because it's so short, it can be done daily (morning or night) without feeling like a burden, keeping the user actively engaged in self-reflection regularly.

## Positive Affirmations Routine

**Description:** A practice of **repeating short, empowering statements** to oneself in order to challenge negative self-talk and build confidence. The user either reads or listens to affirmations like “I am capable and calm,” “I deserve success,” or “I love and accept myself.” These phrases are chosen to resonate with the user’s goals or struggles (e.g., confidence, anxiety) and are stated in the present, positive form. By affirming these beliefs, the user gradually internalizes a more supportive narrative <sup>39</sup>.

**Main Purpose:** To **boost self-esteem, motivation, and emotional resilience** by rewiring thought patterns from negative to positive <sup>40</sup> <sup>39</sup>. Regular use of affirmations can activate reward centers in the brain and reinforce a healthier self-image, which in turn reduces stress and improves overall mental well-being <sup>40</sup>. For example, using calming affirmations (“I am safe, I am at peace”) can lower anxiety in the moment, while confidence affirmations (“I have the skills to handle this”) can increase one’s sense of capability. Over time, this practice supports a growth mindset and helps young professionals combat imposter syndrome or self-doubt with a bit more self-belief each day.

**Suggested Format:** This could be presented as a **list of affirmations in text** that the user can scroll through or tap, possibly with an option to hear them spoken aloud (audio). A nice approach is to have each affirmation on a card or screen, allowing the user to repeat it (either out loud or mentally) a few times before moving to the next. The design should be minimalist and gentle – perhaps displaying one affirmation against a calming background. Alternatively, a daily notification with an affirmation of the day can prompt the user. For a widget, you might include a “shuffle” of a few affirmations or categorize them (confidence, gratitude, calm, etc.).

**Ideal Duration:** **1-2 minutes** for a quick session of repeating a handful of affirmations. The user might, for example, spend a minute in the morning reading three affirmations slowly. Since consistency is key to affirmations’ effectiveness, brief daily use is encouraged <sup>41</sup>. Users can of course extend this – up to 5 or 10 minutes of affirmation practice (perhaps as part of a morning ritual or before a big presentation) to really immerse in the positive statements. But even a single affirmation, sincerely repeated a few times, can have an immediate centering effect.

## Body “Shake and Release” (Energy Reset)

**Description:** A quick **somatic exercise** where the user literally shakes out their body to release tension and re-energize. For instance, one version is to stand up with feet hip-width apart and start gently shaking the hands and arms, then the shoulders, letting the motion loosen the upper body. You can bounce lightly on the knees and let that shake travel through your legs <sup>42</sup>. Essentially, you allow your muscles to jitter and jostle, almost like a dog shaking off water. This intentionally mimics the body’s natural way of dispelling stress energy.

**Main Purpose:** To rapidly **discharge physical tension and reset your nervous system**. Somatic shaking exercises are known to help the body “let go” of stress – they release muscle tightness and can even signal the nervous system to calm down after being in fight-or-flight mode <sup>43</sup>. Users often report feeling both relaxed and invigorated afterward: relaxed because they’ve shed anxiety energy, and invigorated because movement increases blood flow. It’s an excellent afternoon “energy boost” that doesn’t rely on caffeine, as well as a way to come down from a stressful meeting. In short, it reconnects mind and body by freeing stuck energy, contributing to a sense of **balance**.

**Suggested Format:** This exercise benefits from a **visual demonstration**. A short looping video or animation of a person playfully shaking their limbs would encourage users to follow along. Simple text cues can also be given: “Shake out your hands... Now your arms and shoulders... Bounce in place a bit...” etc., guiding the progression. Audio could be upbeat music or a drum beat to shake to, but the tone should remain gentle and not too frantic. You might even gamify it with a 30-second countdown (“Keep shaking! 10 seconds left...”). It’s important to assure users that it’s okay to do this in private if they feel self-conscious – but it can be fun!

**Ideal Duration:** **30 seconds to 2 minutes** of shaking is typically enough for a noticeable effect. Even a **brief 30-second full-body shake** can significantly release tension (many therapists suggest doing this after a stressful event). For an energy boost, 1–2 minutes of continuous gentle shaking/bouncing is great – beyond that, the user might naturally slow down. It’s certainly possible to do longer (some practices do 5 minutes of shaking followed by stillness), but for a public-facing quick exercise, a minute is an easily accessible reset. The user can repeat it as needed throughout the day.

## Daily Check-In & Intention Setting

**Description:** A short **self-reflection check-in**, done ideally each morning (or evening), to tune into your current state and priorities. This often involves asking yourself a couple of questions. For example, in the morning: “How do I feel as I start the day (emotionally and physically)?”, “What is my core focus or value for today?” and perhaps “What’s one thing I can do to honor that focus?” In the evening, a check-in might be “How am I feeling right now after today’s events?” and “What’s one thing I learned or am proud of today?” The idea is to pause and mindfully acknowledge your feelings and set or recall an intention or value, rather than rushing on autopilot <sup>44</sup> <sup>45</sup>.

**Main Purpose:** To increase self-awareness and ensure one’s actions align with their values and well-being needs. By doing a regular check-in, users can catch emotional trends (like burnout or anxiety building up) and course-correct, as well as reconnect with their **sense of purpose each day** rather than just going through the motions <sup>45</sup> <sup>46</sup>. For young professionals, this kind of reflection helps maintain balance amid stress – it’s a moment to remember “why I’m doing what I’m doing” or what truly matters. Ikiglow’s philosophy emphasizes guiding individuals back to themselves and their core values, and this exercise embodies that by fostering daily awareness and intentional living <sup>47</sup> <sup>48</sup>. Over time, daily check-ins can improve emotional regulation and clarity, since you’re less likely to ignore feelings or values until a crisis point.

**Suggested Format:** A **guided journal prompt or slider-based check-in**. One implementation is a daily popup that first asks “How are you feeling?” with an emoji or number scale for mood, and maybe a text box for a quick note. Then it asks an intention question (perhaps from a dropdown of values or user’s own typed value) – e.g., “Which value or goal do you want to center today?” – and then maybe “What’s one small step you’ll take?” This could be purely text, or combined with visuals (e.g., an icon for mood). The key is a minimalist, gentle interface (perhaps a pastel background and a calm font) that makes the user feel safe to introspect. Audio isn’t necessary, but some apps include a voiced prompt or calming sound to begin the routine.

**Ideal Duration:** **2–5 minutes** each time. A basic emotional check and intention can even be done in 1 minute if using simple rating scales or if the user is practiced. However, giving a few minutes allows the reflection to be meaningful (the user might write a couple of sentences or sit with their intention briefly). It’s short enough to do **daily**, which is the goal – consistency over length. If a user wishes, they could extend it (some might journal for 10 minutes on their feelings or goals), but the structured part remains just a few quick prompts. Over weeks, this tiny investment of time each day yields a more centered and purpose-driven mindset throughout their life <sup>46</sup> <sup>49</sup>.

## Progressive Muscle Relaxation (Sleep Wind-Down)

**Description:** A guided relaxation technique often used at night to transition into sleep. Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) involves **tensing and then releasing each muscle group** in your body systematically from head to toe (or toe to head) <sup>50</sup> <sup>51</sup>. For example, you might start at your feet: curl your toes and tense the feet for a few seconds, then exhale and completely relax them. Then move to your calves: tighten, hold, release. Continue through thighs, glutes, abdomen, hands, arms, shoulders, neck, and face. This process not only relaxes the muscles but also calms the mind by giving it a gentle focus.

**Main Purpose:** To **release physical tension and quiet the mind**, making it easier to fall asleep. By the end of a PMR exercise, your body is typically in a state of deep relaxation – a heavy, warm, calm feeling – which is ideal for sleep onset <sup>50</sup>. It's especially helpful if you feel mentally wound-up or physically tense at bedtime; the structured tensing actually makes you more aware of what relaxation feels like in each muscle. This exercise can lower somatic anxiety (like a racing heart or tight chest) by deliberately relaxing those areas, and it often alleviates insomnia that's due to stress or muscle tension <sup>50</sup> <sup>52</sup>. In short, it's a wind-down ritual that signals to your body that it's safe to let go and rest.

**Suggested Format:** **Audio guided** is ideal here. A soft, slow voice can walk the user through each body part ("Now gently tighten your right hand into a fist... hold... and release. Feel the difference as it relaxes."). Background gentle music or nature sounds can be included at a very low volume to enhance tranquility. If using text, it should be a script the user reads before trying it (since reading while doing it isn't practical); for instance, instructions on the page they can recall or print. As a widget, an audio player with a "Sleep Relaxation – Start" button would be great. Visuals could be a silhouette of a body highlighting each area as the audio progresses, but audio alone usually suffices.

**Ideal Duration:** **5-10 minutes** for a standard session covering all major muscle groups. It can be done in as little as 5 minutes if each step is brief, which is enough to take the edge off and relax the body. A longer version (10-15 minutes) is often used for those with more time or difficulty sleeping – this allows more gradual transitions and longer holds/releases, deepening the relaxation. Users can be encouraged to stop whenever they feel ready to sleep; some might even fall asleep before finishing the routine. Because this is a wind-down exercise, duration can be flexible – the focus is on a thorough, unhurried sense of release, whether that's in a quick 5-minute scan or a luxurious 15 minutes. Many will find that **within minutes of completion, they drift off to sleep** if done in bed <sup>53</sup> <sup>54</sup>.

Each of these exercises supports personal growth and well-being in a **bite-sized, accessible format**. They can be mixed and matched throughout the day – a morning intention, a breathing break at work, a grounding exercise during anxiety, and a wind-down at night – to help users live with more calm, clarity, and purpose. All content is presented in Ikiglow's signature tone: gentle, insightful, and empowering, inviting users to take a moment for themselves and discover that small habits can spark significant positive change in their mindset and life.

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup> <sup>3</sup> <sup>5</sup> Box breathing: how to do it and why it matters — Calm Blog

<https://www.calm.com/blog/box-breathing>

<sup>4</sup> Box Breathing: How to, Benefits, and Tips

<https://www.healthline.com/health/copd/box-breathing>

<sup>6</sup> <sup>7</sup> <sup>8</sup> <sup>9</sup> 4-7-8 Breathing Method For Sleep and Relaxation

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/4-7-8-breathing>



10 11 12 13 14 15 **How Coherent Breathing Can Help Reduce Stress**

<https://www.verywellmind.com/an-overview-of-coherent-breathing-4178943>

16 17 18 **How the 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique Can Help You Calm Down**

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19 20 **A One-Minute Meditation You Can Do Anywhere - Headspace**

<https://www.headspace.com/meditation/one-minute-meditation>

21 22 23 **Guided imagery: Techniques, benefits, and more**

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/guided-imagery>

24 25 26 **The 5-Minute Technique I Use to Defeat Negative Self-Talk**

<https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/self-talk-exercises>

27 28 29 30 31 33 **Exercise 2: Self-Compassion Break - Self-Compassion**

<https://self-compassion.org/exercises/exercise-2-self-compassion-break/>

32 **[PDF] Self-Compassion Break Script from Bob Gillespie This practice is the ...**

<https://www.fammed.wisc.edu/files/webfm-uploads/documents/research/stream/sc-break-script.pdf>

34 35 36 37 **20 Gratitude Exercises & Activities to Boost Wellbeing**

<https://positivepsychology.com/gratitude-exercises/>

38 **Journaling for Mindfulness: 44 Prompts, Examples & Exercises**

<https://positivepsychology.com/journaling-for-mindfulness/>

39 40 41 **Positive Daily Affirmations: Is There Science Behind It?**

<https://positivepsychology.com/daily-affirmations/>

42 43 **5 'Somatic Shaking' Exercises To Release Stored Stress**

<https://www.femina.in/wellness/health/amp-stories/5-somatic-shaking-exercises-to-release-stored-stress-289043.amp>

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<file:///file-W9C3vaEpqXbBpGV9zm1kUX>

50 51 52 53 54 **Try this: Progressive muscle relaxation for sleep - Harvard Health**

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/try-this-progressive-muscle-relaxation-for-sleep>