



Quick-Start Stress Guide

3 Five-Minute Habits That Actually Work

Your nervous system is running the show — and it doesn't care how many to-do lists you have. These three habits work with your physiology, not against it. No yoga mat, no app, no hour-long routine.

Five minutes is enough to shift your state.

01 The Bilateral Reset Walk

Move stress out of your body — literally.

When you're overwhelmed, your brain is stuck in a loop. Bilateral movement — alternating left-right input through walking — helps interrupt that loop and discharge stored stress hormones.

How to do it: Step outside (or pace your hallway) for 5 minutes. Let your arms swing naturally. No headphones, no podcast. Just move and notice what's around you — a color, a sound, something your feet feel. That shift in attention is part of the reset.

WHY IT WORKS: Walking activates bilateral brain stimulation, lowers cortisol, and gives your nervous system something to organize around besides the stressor.

02 The Physiological Sigh

The fastest way to turn off the stress response.

Stanford researchers identified this as the single most efficient breathing technique for rapid stress relief. It's also something your body already does automatically — you've just never used it on purpose.

How to do it: Take a normal inhale through your nose. At the top, take one more quick sniff to fully inflate your lungs. Then release with a long, slow exhale through your mouth — longer than your inhale. Repeat 2–3 times. Done.

WHY IT WORKS: The double inhale fully inflates lung sacs and off-loads excess CO₂. The extended exhale activates the parasympathetic nervous system — your built-in brake pedal.

03 The Evening Cortisol Cutoff

Stop borrowing energy from tomorrow.

Most people's cortisol stays elevated into the evening because the brain never gets a clear signal that the day is done. This habit gives it that signal.

How to do it: At least 60 minutes before bed, dim your lights (lamps over overhead), put your phone face-down, and do one thing with your hands — fold laundry, make tea, sketch something, stretch lightly. No scrolling. This isn't about being perfect; it's about giving your brain a transition.

WHY IT WORKS: Bright light and screen stimulation suppress melatonin and keep cortisol elevated. A hands-on, low-stimulus activity signals the hypothalamus that it's safe to downshift.

Ready to go deeper?

These habits work — and they work even better when they're part of a plan built around your specific physiology.

At Encompass, Natalie helps high-functioning women figure out exactly why they're exhausted and build a sustainable path back to feeling like themselves.

Book a free Clarity Call → encompass.care · (303) 531-0023 · info@encompass.care

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