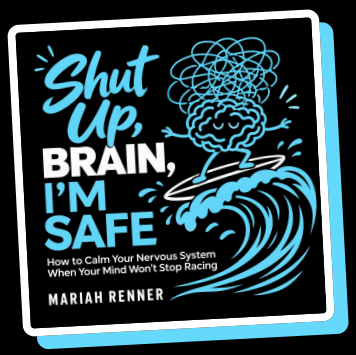
your free companion kit

Notice, Name, Nudge Kit



The tools from this book, written down, so they're there the next time you need a little more room.



THE PRINTABLE COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

Shut Up, Brain, I'm Safe

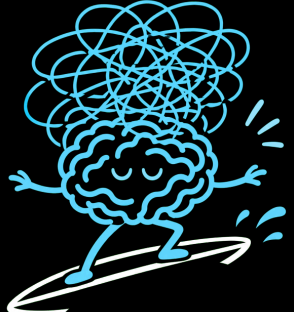
How to Calm Your Nervous System When Your Mind Won't Stop Racing

MARIAH RENNER

PRINT WHAT YOU NEED · SKIP THE REST

please read this first

Before you start



THE BOOK'S SAFETY NOTE, WORD FOR WORD

The tools in this book are only for a specific pattern that a doctor has already assessed, and that is behaving exactly the way it did before. For example, the usual mild chest tightness of a panic wave that's been checked. Familiar isn't enough. A feeling you've had a hundred times but never had looked at is still unexplained, and it's worth a doctor's visit before you handle it with anything from a book.

Call your local emergency number, that's 911 in the US, for any of these.

- Chest pain, pressure or discomfort that is new, different from your checked pattern, stronger or longer than usual, or that spreads to your arm, jaw, neck or back.
- Chest symptoms that come with shortness of breath, sweating, nausea or dizziness.
- Severe or sudden trouble breathing, like gasping or not being able to speak.
- Or any symptom that is new, sudden or severe.

Mild or unusual chest discomfort counts. Heart symptoms can be subtle, especially in women, people with diabetes and older adults. If you're not sure whether something is your usual pattern, treat it as new. And please don't use a nurse line to decide about chest pain. Call for emergency help.

I mean that. Please don't skip past it.

So this book is for patterns a doctor has already looked at, and that haven't changed since. Familiarity never overrides the warning I just gave you. This book is not a way to talk yourself out of something new.

Where to try the tools

If you're driving, just listen. Try the tools once you've parked.

I will never ask you to close your eyes or splash cold water on your face while you're behind the wheel.

Somewhere busy, like a crowded sidewalk or a packed train? Keep your eyes open, keep it small, and save the rest for later.

What this kit is, and isn't

I'm not a therapist. I'm not a doctor.

There are no medical claims in here. No supplement advice. No medication advice.

The tools in this book can help you get through hard moments. They can give you more room, more choices, more of a sense that you're not just a passenger. But they're not treatment. If you're dealing with something that needs treatment, these tools can sit alongside that. They don't replace it.

room, not calm

The aim here isn't calm. Calm is lovely, but it's a big ask in the middle of aisle seven. The aim is a little more room. A little more space between you and whatever your body is shouting, so you can actually see what's in front of you.

When you need more than tools: the full help page is page 14.

hi. I'm glad you're here.

How to use this kit



This is the book's tools on paper, so you don't have to remember them in a hard minute. Print what you need. **Skip the rest. No guilt.** And room, not calm, is what we're after.

Find your tool

TO GUESS YOUR SETTING
The three settings map 4

THREE WORDS FOR THE GAP
The Notice, Name, Nudge card 5

WIRED, BUZZING, TIGHT
When You're Revved Up menu 6

FLAT, FOGGY, HEAVY
When You've Shut Down menu 8

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FOR A FAMILIAR WAVE A DOCTOR HAS CHECKED
The honest phrases card 10

BEFORE A DOCTOR'S VISIT
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WHEN A HACK VIDEO POPS UP
The Myth Check filter 12

THIRTY SECONDS, EVERY DAY
The regulation snacks menu 13

WHEN YOU NEED MORE THAN TOOLS
Get help 14

Every tool has a label

When I first introduce a tool, I'll tell you which of three buckets it sits in.

STUDIED There's real research on it.

LOW STAKES Not much hard evidence, but it costs nothing, it probably won't hurt, and plenty of people say it helps them.

MARKETING Big promises, small proof.

Sometimes the research is about something nearby, not the exact exercise I'm giving you. When that happens, I'll say so, because "related" and "tested" are not the same word.

The stopping rule

So here's the stopping rule for every tool in this book. If a tool clearly makes you feel worse, stop using it. If it does nothing a handful of times in a row, drop it too, and try a different kind of nudge another day, or an outward one. This rule is for the optional comfort tools in this book. If you're doing exposure work with a therapist, some temporary discomfort is part of that treatment, so follow their guidance.

My keepers

Keep the tools that help, let go of the ones that don't. Write down the ones you keep.

When I'm revved up: _____ **When I've shut down:** _____ **Any time:** _____

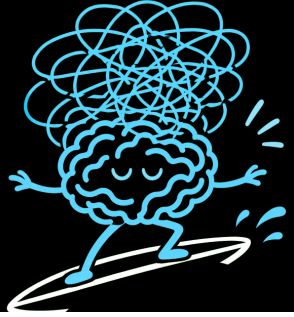
Practice on an ordinary day

If you try a small tool on an ordinary Tuesday, when nothing is wrong, it becomes familiar. Then when aisle seven comes around, you aren't learning it for the first time with your heart pounding.

Practice the tools, free:
kalderno.com/imsafe/practice
This kit and more:
kalderno.com/imsafe

tool 1 of 8 · recognize the setting

The three settings map



I want to help you recognize which setting you're in. Not change it. Changing comes later. **You don't need to believe in a theory to notice your jaw is clenched.**

Revved up

Revved up is fight or flight.

- Your arms and legs buzz, like they're humming with a current you didn't plug in.
- Your jaw clenches.
- Your breath goes shallow, little sips of air near the top of your chest.
- You get irritable.
- And your thoughts sprint ahead of you.

Shut down

Shut down is the flat setting.

- You feel numb. Foggy. Heavy, like your limbs have been filled with wet sand.
- Far away, as if you're watching your own life through a pane of thick glass.
- The phrase that lives here is "I can't be bothered," and it shows up even for things you genuinely love.

It isn't a diagnosis, and it doesn't tell you the cause.

Okay

Okay means you're present enough to think, to feel, and to connect with another person.

- And okay can still include mild stress.
- One way to spot okay is to look for a little room to choose.
- Treat that as a clue, not a rule.

Both at once

It's the "both at once" setting. Wired and tired. Buzzing but exhausted.

You're not broken for having this. It's common, and it's why these are sliders, not switches.

The quick check-in

1. Take one ordinary breath.
2. Now ask yourself: "If I had to guess right now, am I revved up, shut down, or okay?"
3. If you came up blank, pick one small place in your body and check it. Your jaw. Your shoulders. How heavy your arms feel right now.

"Honestly, I have no idea" counts as information too. You're not being graded.

One word, three times a day

Three times today, check in and give yourself one word. **"Revved." "Flat." "Okay." "Both." That's all.**

Day	Soon after you wake up	Middle of the day	In the evening
Day 1			
Day 2			
Day 3			
Day 4			
Day 5			
Day 6			
Day 7			

So please treat this map as a tool for noticing. Not settled fact.

tool 2 of 8 · three words for the gap

The Notice, Name, Nudge card



The framework itself is three words. Notice, name, nudge. Three short words is about what a revved-up brain can carry. Neither one has to win the argument.

FRONT

Notice.
Name.
Nudge.

You don't have to argue with the story.

BACK · THE CYCLE, UNDER A MINUTE

Notice Notice means catching the body signal before the story about it.

Name Now name your setting, in one word. Revved, flat, okay, both, or not sure.

Nudge Nudge means one small step toward okay.

Check Better, the same, or worse? Any of those is an honest answer.

Cut along the dashes Fold on the dots Keep it where you'll see it

FRONT · THE QUICK SCAN

- Your jaw. Teeth touching, or apart?
- Your shoulders. Up near your ears, or resting?
- Your breath. High or low?
- Your hands. Open or clenched?
- Your feet. Restless, still, heavy?

Or look outward. One sound. One color. The air on your skin. **That counts as noticing.**

BACK · NUDGE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Revved let your next breath out run a little longer, or loosen your hands.

Flat sit up a little, or look at something far away.

Okay there's nothing to do.

If you pick the wrong kind, you'll probably feel it, and you can try the other.

Cut along the dashes Fold on the dots

Find your early signal

One way to find yours is to work backwards. The next time you realize you're already deep in a spiral, ask what your body was doing a minute ago. Whatever showed up first is your early signal.

Mine: _____

Keep the word boring

A name with a scolding attached is just one more story.

Noticing is a quick glance, a few times a day, not a constant watch.

When checking starts to feel like a job, look outward instead.

One more question

So once you've got a little room, ask one more question: "Does something here need changing, not just calming?"

It can't make an unsafe home safe, or an impossible workload fair.

Where to turn: page 14.

A few snags tend to come up.

"I can't tell which state I'm in." Guess, if guessing helps. If that happens, skip the label and go straight to something outside you. A color, a sound, a sip of water.

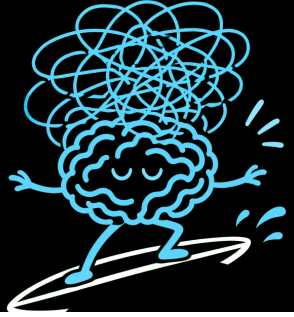
"I'm both at once." Nudge whichever one is louder. You don't have to solve both in one go.

"It didn't work." Sometimes it doesn't. A tool can do nothing at all, and that's a real result, not a hidden success. The stopping rule is on page 3.

Today Catch one sensation-and-thought loop, just one, and run the full cycle once. You only have to notice that it's sitting on top of a tight chest.

tool 3 of 8 · six tools, point at one

When You're Revved Up menu



Nobody orders the whole menu. You read it, see what you're in the mood for, and point at one thing. **We're going to give that energy somewhere to go, and turn the heat down a notch.**

1 The sigh

STUDIED, IN A LIMITED WAY

1. First, a slow breath out through your mouth. Just let some air go. No pushing.
2. Now in through your nose.
3. And a little top-up sip, only if it's comfortable.
4. Now out through your mouth, long and slow.

Right now, in the moment, this is a low-stakes thing to try.

- Some feel slightly light-headed, in which case go back to normal breathing and don't stack up rounds. Two or three is plenty. And if the top-up still feels like too much, leave it out.

2 The jaw drop

LOW STAKES

1. Keep your lips gently closed. Behind them, let your back teeth come apart, just a sliver.
2. Let your tongue rest lightly on the roof of your mouth, just behind your upper front teeth.
3. Leave it there for three slow breaths out.

- Don't force your mouth wide, and stop if anything clicks, aches, or feels stuck. Jaw pain that keeps coming back is worth mentioning to a dentist or doctor.

3 Shaking it out

LOW STAKES

This one may feel silly. Silly is allowed.

1. Start with your hands. Let them go loose and shake them, like you've washed them and there's no towel.
2. Let it spread up into your arms and shoulders, if that's comfortable.
3. And stop. Notice what's buzzing now.

- If your joints hurt, you get dizzy easily, or your balance isn't great, stay seated and keep it to your hands. Move only as much as feels comfortable, and stop whenever you want.

4 Feet into the floor

LOW STAKES

It's still one of my favorites, because nobody can see you doing it.

1. If you're sitting, put both feet flat on the floor, roughly under your knees.
2. Push down, hard enough to feel it in your thighs. Notice your heels. Feel the floor push back. And release.
3. Counting slowly while you press gives your thoughts a little rail to hold onto.

5 Cool water

LOW STAKES

with some nearby research.

1. Run the water cool. Not icy, just cooler than your skin, and test it with a fingertip first.
2. Hold the soft insides of your wrists under it for a few slow breaths.
3. Then turn it off and pat your wrists dry.

No sink? Hold a chilled bottle of water against the inside of your wrist for a few slow breaths.

- Cool and pleasant, never so cold it hurts. You don't need any ice.

6 The walk

LOW STAKES

This one is optional, and it's the biggest tool on the menu.

1. Start brisk but not racing, like you're a bit late for something that doesn't matter.
2. Then, over the last minute or so, slow down bit by bit. Stop, and feel your feet on the ground.

- Choose a safe route you know. Keep your eyes open. If you're listening to anything, me included, keep the volume low or one ear free so you can hear traffic.

DRIVING? Try the tools once you've parked.

Which tool, where: page 7.

Which tool, where



If people can see you and you've got no room, go small: feet, jaw, or a quiet sigh. A closed door means you can go bigger. Five free minutes and somewhere safe to walk, go biggest.

AT YOUR DESK
feet into the floor, or the jaw drop. Nobody can see either.

IN LINE AT THE STORE
feet again, or one quiet sigh. Everyone in a line is sighing anyway.

IN THE BATHROOM AT A PARTY
the sigh shines here. Door locked, two or three rounds. Cool wrists if there's a sink.

RIGHT AFTER AN ARGUMENT
the walk, if you can get out somewhere safe, or shaking it out behind a closed door.

The small versions

- If you're worried about being heard, part your lips only a little, so the air comes out slow and soft, like you're cooling a spoonful of soup.
- In a meeting, skip the fingertips. Lips closed, teeth apart, tongue soft.
- No door, no space? Drop your hands into your lap and shake just your hands, loosely, for a few seconds.
- If you can't go out, or you're in bed, there's an in-place version. Sit or stand, and march your feet slowly where you are.

And in bed, when you can't get up.

1. Press your heels gently into the mattress. Five slow counts. Release.
2. Lips closed, teeth apart, tongue soft.
3. One long breath out through barely parted lips.
4. If your mind keeps pacing, look outward. Count three sounds.

You're not trying to fall asleep on cue, or to stop being annoyed.

My two tools

Two tools, then. Feet for meetings. Sigh for the bathroom. **Your kit doesn't have to be big. It has to be something you'll reach for.**

Tool: _____ **Tool:** _____

For: _____ **For:** _____

The quick foot press, anywhere

1. Press both feet into the floor. Not gently. Push down, like you're trying to leave footprints in the carpet.
2. Hold it for a slow count of five.
3. Feel the floor push back.
4. Now let go.

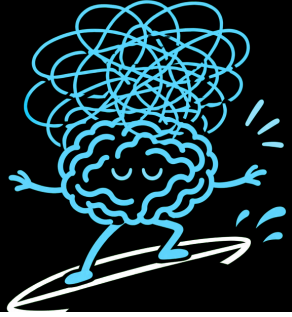
Your heart may still be going. That's allowed. **The next time your body does its old, checked pattern, press your feet into the floor once, and ask yourself, "What can I see now?"**

Today Next time you catch your back teeth pressed together, try one tool, just once. It doesn't have to go well.

DRIVING? Try the tools once you've parked.

tool 4 of 8 · pick the one within reach

When You've Shut Down menu



Pick the one tool that's already within reach. Literally within reach. Skip the rest. They'll still be here. All five sit in the low-stakes bucket.

1 Orienting

LOW STAKES

Orienting just means looking around. Letting your eyes land on things.

1. Slowly turn your head to one side. Slowly. Like a sleepy owl.
2. Let your eyes land on something. Name it, out loud or in your head. "Lamp."
3. Notice a color.
4. Turn your head slowly the other way, and find one thing you hadn't seen before.

If you're lying flat and turning your head feels like too much, do it with your eyes alone.

2 Gentle movement

LOW STAKES

This is not exercise. If a workout is a shout, this is a mumble.

1. Roll your shoulders backward. Slowly.
2. Now stretch your arms up over your head. As high as is comfortable. Not as high as possible.
3. If you can, and only if you can, stand up and walk to the nearest window.

If standing up is out of the question today, keep it smaller. Wiggle your toes.

3 Warmth

LOW STAKES

1. If there's warmth already around you, use it. A mug in both hands, even the half-cold one from earlier. A blanket over your shoulders. A patch of sun across the floor or the couch.
2. Stay with the warmth.
3. Now find one word for the feeling. "Warm." "Heavy." "Nice." "Sleepy." Even "meh."

4 Something pleasant within reach

LOW STAKES Look for a small pleasant sensation that's already right there. Nothing you have to fetch.

1. If you're in bed, that might be your pillowcase. Or the cool side of the sheet, the bit your body hasn't warmed up yet.
2. Touch it now. Notice the texture. Rough, soft, smooth, bumpy.
3. Now the temperature. Cool, warm, somewhere in between.

That was enough. It really was.

5 One message

LOW STAKES

Open one conversation with one person who feels safe. Someone who won't make a big thing of it.

> **"Thinking of you."**
>
> **"How's your week?"**
>
> **A picture of a dog. Any dog.**

You can send it, or save it as a draft for later. Either one counts. **One message, then the phone goes across the room.**

If nobody comes to mind, that isn't a failure. Or, if you'd like to talk to someone, many US states have a warmline: a free phone line, often staffed by people who've struggled themselves, for when things are hard but not an emergency. Search "warmline" and your state. Hours vary, so check before you call.

Connection is a nudge, not a test.

DRIVING? Try the tools once you've parked.

Lighter, same or heavier: page 9.

Lighter, same, or heavier?



But sometimes what you need is rest. Real rest. So here's a check. **Try one small thing for a minute or two, then ask yourself: lighter, same, or heavier?**

Lighter
If it's lighter, even a little, you might try one more.

Same
If it's the same, that's a real answer. Stop, or try a different kind of tool another time.

Heavier
If it's heavier, more drained or foggier, stop. Lie down under the blanket and rest, without the guilt.

Gentle input, or rest
When you feel flat and foggy, a little gentle input often helps more than extra stillness. Light. Movement. Warmth. Contact with something or someone. And gentle matters. A crack in the curtains is usually easier to take than the whole window flung open at noon. **Rest is allowed. Blanket, warm drink, early night.**

Where rest stops
Rest that leaves you a little restored is rest. Days where you aren't answering anyone, aren't eating properly, can barely get up, and nothing touches it, are something else. That's no longer a job for more nudges. That's the time to bring in support, and page 14 says where. But if it hangs on, gets severe, or starts getting in the way of your days, it needs a proper look from a healthcare professional.

Kinder words
Instead of "get up, you useless lump," try what you'd say to a friend with the flu.

> **"Okay. Let's just put the kettle on."**

> **"One sock. Then we'll see."**

You wouldn't shout at a phone with two percent battery. You'd plug it in.

When the flatness lasts
Alongside getting help, and never instead of it, there are some small ways back toward feeling.

- Aim lower. You're not looking for pleasant. You're looking for "not bad."
- Find one plain sensation. The weight of your body where you are. Your sleeve against your wrist.
- If nothing came, "nothing" is an honest answer.

And if the flatness has been around for a while, tell one person. A clumsy text counts.

"When was it a bit lighter today?"
Try this before bed. If something comes up, type one or two words into the notes on your phone. "Bus window." "Mom's call." Or write them here.

Day 1 _____ **Day 5** _____

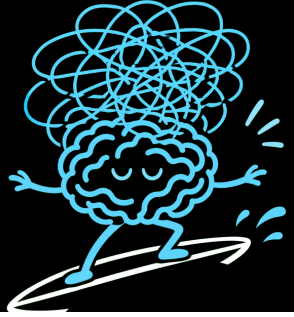
Day 2 _____ **Day 6** _____

Day 3 _____ **Day 7** _____

Day 4 _____ **Next** _____

tool 5 of 8 · for a familiar, checked wave

The honest phrases card



First: the safety note from the Introduction comes first, always. That includes chest symptoms that are different in any way from the pattern your doctor checked. It is on page 2. Riding a wave is for one kind of pattern: one a doctor has assessed, and one that hasn't changed since.

But they need to be words you can believe. **Choose one now**, tick it, and keep the card in your wallet.

HERE ARE SOME HONEST PHRASES.

- ☐ **"This is a wave I know."**
- ☐ **"I don't have to like it."**
- ☐ **"It will crest."**
- ☐ **"I've been here before, and I got through it."**
- ☐ **"My body is loud right now. Loud isn't the same as dangerous, for this one."**
- ☐ **"I can wait."**

My phrase: _____

BACK · THE RIDE

1. Name it. "This is a wave. The usual one."
2. Press your feet into the ground.
3. Or go outward. Name three things you can see. If attention on your breath makes it worse, skip it.
4. Say your phrase.
5. Now wait.

If yours is still going, keep cycling through the same few things: feet, one thing you see, your phrase.

Cut along the dashes Fold on the dots Wallet size when folded

The shape of a wave

"This is the climbing bit. Climbing bits end." Some waves fade slowly, with a few bumps on the way down. Your own usual pattern, the one your doctor knows about, is the yardstick.

The gentle version

Or do the gentle version: name three things you can see, give the floor one push with your feet, and say your phrase. That's practice too, with no rehearsal at all.

But know when to stop riding it.

If it isn't easing the way your usual waves do, or waves keep coming one after another, stop and get help. Call your doctor, or a nurse advice line if your health plan has one. And if anything about it is different from your usual pattern, especially in your chest or your breathing, go straight back to the safety note from the Introduction.

In a car

If a wave starts while you're driving, pull over safely first, and only use any of this once you're stopped somewhere safe with the engine off.

Afterwards

Be gentle with yourself here. A warm drink. Sitting down for a bit. Something soft to touch. A message to someone safe, if you want one. Treat yourself like a friend who just did something hard.

Write it down

Before today is over, write down the phrase you chose, so it's ready when you're not calm.

A scrap of paper in your wallet, tucked behind a receipt.

If the waves come often

If you're having panic waves often, that's worth a visit to the doctor. Even if they're familiar. Even if you've had them checked before. There is proper help out there, from people trained to give it. How to describe it: page 11.

tool 6 of 8 · for a doctor's visit

How to describe it worksheet



Getting checked should be about as dramatic as getting your tires looked at. **Four questions can help you sort out what to say.**

Here are some signs it's time to make an appointment.

- **Your symptoms have lasted weeks.**
- **They're getting worse.**
- **They're getting in the way of your work, your sleep, or your relationships.**
- **Or you're simply worried. That's enough on its own.**

For anything that fits the safety note from the Introduction, including any new or different chest discomfort, that note comes first, not an appointment. The safety note is on page 2.

What is it?

Describe the feeling in plain words.

When does it happen?

Mornings, evenings, weekends, in stores, before meetings, out of nowhere.

How often?

And how long it's been going on.

What helps?

Anything that makes it better or worse. "Nothing seems to help" is a useful answer too.

My one sentence

Did anything here ring a bell? If so, write your own version in one sentence today. What it is, when it happens, how long it's been. Jordan's sentence is a good shape to copy.

"For about three months I've felt flat most weekends, things I used to enjoy don't do anything for me, and I'm sleeping badly."

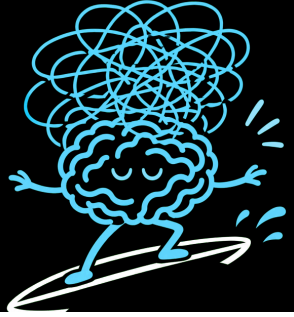
Your job is just to open the door. If getting help isn't simple, see page 14.

If it isn't urgent, you can spend a week jotting one line each evening: what you felt, roughly when, and what changed it.

Day	What I felt	When	What changed it
Day 1			
Day 2			
Day 3			
Day 4			
Day 5			
Day 6			
Day 7			

tool 7 of 8 · four questions for any claim

The Myth Check filter



Now, here's a filter you can use on any claim. Four questions. And you're most likely to be scrolling when you feel worst.

1 Does it promise a cure?

Real help rarely promises that.

2 Does it say "always," "permanent" or "total"?

Bodies are too different from each other for "always," and lasting change is rarely that simple.

3 Is it selling something?

That doesn't make it wrong. It does mean you should look a bit harder.

4 Did anyone test what this video is actually promising?

Not something nearby. Not a related idea. The exact thing being promised.

Try it on a made-up post

> **"This little ear clip resets your vagus nerve. Works every time. Link in my bio."**

Three flags already. The post doesn't say, and that silence tells you plenty.

A claim I saw

_____

_____

☐ A cure? ☐ Always, permanent or total?
☐ Selling something? ☐ Then the big one.

So here are my quick verdicts.

- The sigh: a daily practice was tested, with modest mood benefits, but an instant fix for panic in a grocery store wasn't.
- Naming the state: the research used words for emotions, not "revved" or "flat," so my version is worth a try but still an open question.
- Cool water: the lab research is on cold water and the face, and cool wrists at a sink is my gentler adaptation.
- Shaking it out, orienting, the foot press: no studies I can point to, just low risk and optional.

They pass by being honest about how small they are.

Keep the part that's fine

If humming feels nice, hum. If a slow breath out helps you settle, breathe slowly. Stretch if you like it. Just don't pay extra for the filing system.

On professional help, too

A licensed clinician who can tell you what's been tested for your specific problem, and who's honest about what hasn't, passes.

before you buy anything

Did anyone actually test what this is promising?

Most of the time, that one question is all the filter you'll need.

tool 8 of 8 · thirty seconds, on a hook

The regulation snacks menu



I call these regulation snacks. They're tiny habits, about thirty seconds each, hung on moments that already happen in your day. **So here's the whole plan at its smallest: one snack, on one hook. If that's all you ever do, you're doing the plan.**

Tara's kettle: while the kettle rumbles, she stands in her socks and presses her feet into the cold kitchen tiles for five slow counts. Then one sigh, the two-breaths-in kind, with a long breath out. **That's it. About thirty seconds.**

Start with one snack. When that feels easy, and only if you want to, add more, up to three.

Pick from	My snack	My hook
One revved tool. The sigh, the foot press, cool wrists, shaking it out.		
One shut-down tool. Orienting, a slow shoulder roll, warmth in both hands, touching something soft.		
One moment of connection. A text, a call, a real hello.		

Hooks

Attach each one to something you already do. The kettle. Brushing your teeth. Sitting down at your desk. The moment after you park. Taking off your shoes when you get home. Short, boring moments work best, because your attention is free in them.

One menu might look like this.

- Revved tool: the sigh, while the shower warms up.
- Shut-down tool: a slow shoulder roll when the laptop finishes loading.
- Connection: a real hello to whoever's at the register when you buy lunch.

One snack, start to finish

1. First, notice. Find one body signal.
2. Now name it. Revved, flat, okay, or both. A guess is fine.
3. Then nudge. One small thing. Or let your jaw drop a sliver.

If nothing much changed, that's an honest result. If it felt worse, try a different nudge next time.

WRITE YOUR SNACK ON A STICKY NOTE ON THE KETTLE.

My snack: _____

My hook: _____

Leave it there as long as it helps.

One experiment, if you like

Which one change could I still be doing in three weeks, on a bad week? A snack is thirty seconds hung on a hook. An experiment is a change to your day that you try and watch.

Mine: _____

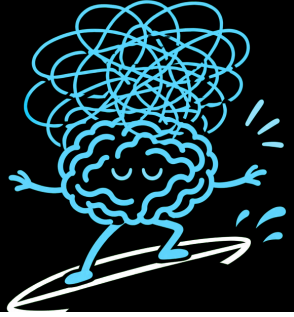
The stopping rule, for snacks

And if a snack does nothing, or leaves you feeling worse, drop it, try another kind another day. If nothing helps for weeks, turn to page 14, not to trying harder.

And repetition isn't rewiring anything I can promise you. What it does is make a tool familiar, so it's within reach when a hard minute comes.

when you need more than tools

Get help



Call for emergency help.

Call your local emergency number, that's 911 in the US, for any of these. Chest pain, pressure or discomfort that is new, different from your checked pattern, stronger or longer than usual, or that spreads to your arm, jaw, neck or back. Chest symptoms that come with shortness of breath, sweating, nausea or dizziness. Severe or sudden trouble breathing, like gasping or not being able to speak. Or any symptom that is new, sudden or severe.

Mild or unusual chest discomfort counts. Heart symptoms can be subtle, especially in women, people with diabetes and older adults. If you're not sure whether something is your usual pattern, treat it as new. And please don't use a nurse line to decide about chest pain. Call for emergency help.

If you ever have thoughts of harming yourself

please reach out right now.

In the US, you can call or text 988 to reach the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, any time of day or night. Outside the US, the website findahelpline.com lists crisis lines by country.

If you're in immediate danger, call your local emergency number, that's 911 in the US.

You don't need to be sure. You don't need to have a plan, or be at your worst, or have the right words. If those thoughts are there, reach out now, or ask someone near you to help you make that call. You deserve support today, not later.

If someone at home is hurting you

If you're being hurt at home, or you're afraid of someone you live with, you can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline. That's 1-800-799-7233.

And if you're in danger right now, call 911.

If you notice you're mostly using these tools to put up with something that keeps hurting you, take that as a sign to reach for more than tools.

Keep the tools that help, let go of the ones that don't, and remember that seeing a doctor is a smart move, never a failure.

The tools are only for a checked pattern

The tools in this book are only for a specific pattern that a doctor has already assessed, and that is behaving exactly the way it did before. For example, the usual mild chest tightness of a panic wave that's been checked. Familiar isn't enough. A feeling you've had a hundred times but never had looked at is still unexplained, and it's worth a doctor's visit before you handle it with anything from a book.

I mean that. Please don't skip past it.

See a doctor

- So if your racing thoughts are new or severe, or they come with needing much less sleep than usual, unusual energy, or changes in how you act, don't chalk them up to your nervous system. Get them looked at first.
- If you're having panic waves often, that's worth a visit to the doctor. Even if they're familiar. Even if you've had them checked before.
- But if it hangs on, gets severe, or starts getting in the way of your days, it needs a proper look from a healthcare professional.
- So watch for the bigger signs instead. Tiredness that won't lift. Losing interest in things. Feeling detached. Finding it harder to get through your days. Your world getting smaller. Fewer replies, fewer places, fewer people. When that's what your days look like, reach for support instead of nudging harder.
- Or you're simply worried. That's enough on its own.

And if the flatness has been around for a while, tell one person. A clumsy text counts. Or, if you'd like to talk to someone, many US states have a warmline: a free phone line, often staffed by people who've struggled themselves, for when things are hard but not an emergency.

When getting help isn't simple

- No regular doctor, or worried about cost? Community health centers often charge on a sliding scale based on income. Search "HRSA find a health center" to find one near you.
- A long wait? Ask to go on a cancellation list, and keep your notes going.
- Scared? Bring someone with you, or read your sentence off your phone.
- Felt brushed off? That happens, and it doesn't mean you were wrong to go. "What else could this be?" "What should make me come back sooner?" "Can I see a specialist?"

if you keep anything, keep this much

Your body and mind feed each other. Your settings slide between revved up, shut down and okay. Notice, name, nudge buys you a little room. Keep the tools that help, let go of the ones that don't, and remember that seeing a doctor is a smart move, never a failure.

The win isn't making the pounding stop. It's choosing while you're still a little rattled.

"Shut up, brain, I'm safe" isn't something you yell once and have it stick. And it's only true when the alarm is a false one. When it is, you get to remind yourself, kettle by kettle, aisle by aisle. When it isn't, the room you've made is for doing something about it.

The next time you park, give yourself one snack before you get out. Engine off, keys in your lap. Press your feet into the floor mat, let one slow breath out, and then open the door. I'll be doing the same.

Mariah MARIAH RENNER



THIS KIT AND MORE, FREE

kalderno.com/imsafe

Practice the tools:
kalderno.com/imsafe/practice
Scan the code or type the address.