

Anxiety Reset Protocol

Immediate and long-term tools backed by clinical evidence

ACUTE RESPONSE (USE IMMEDIATELY)

- Box breathing: 4 in / 4 hold / 4 out / 4 hold**
5 minutes = ~15 cycles, measurable HRV shift
- Physiological sigh: double inhale through nose, long exhale**
Fastest single-breath way to lower sympathetic activation
- 5-4-3-2-1 grounding: name 5 things you can see**
Redirects attention to present sensory experience
- Cold water on face or wrists for 30 seconds**
Triggers the diving reflex, slows heart rate

DAILY MAINTENANCE

- Morning sunlight within 30 min of waking (10–30 min)**
Sets cortisol peak timing, reduces afternoon anxiety
- Consistent sleep/wake time**
Sleep deprivation amplifies amygdala reactivity by ~60%
- Daily structured movement — any form, 20+ minutes**
Consistent exercise reduces baseline anxiety as effectively as medication in mild-moderate cases
- Limit caffeine to before 1pm**
Caffeine directly increases cortisol and anxiety markers
- Limit alcohol — it increases anxiety the following day**
Rebound anxiety from alcohol metabolism is well-documented

WEEKLY PRACTICES

- Expressive writing: 20 minutes, 3x per week**
Pennebaker's research: reduces cortisol over 4–6 weeks
- Social connection — in-person preferred**
Oxytocin downregulates amygdala response
- Review your anxiety journal for patterns**
Awareness of triggers enables proactive management