

Subject: 60 Second Tricks for Instant Mental Clarity

Monday Morning Motivator

INSTANT CALMER

**How 1-Minute Meditation
Micropractices Can Reduce
Stress, Increase Wellbeing
and Boost Your Focus**



Hi NAME

In the 1970s I was mesmerised by George Harrison...

He had the air of an ancient guru, with his long beard and spiritual songs – even though he was a lad from Liverpool!

I knew he was into ‘meditation’, which I assumed was some weird mystical practice only adepts could master.

For many people, Harrison still represents the cliché of the kind of person who meditates daily.

The hippy figure who drops out, smokes marijuana, listens to sitar music, and spends hours travelling the astral plane.

Which is why most people ignore it, mock it, or assume it’s not something they could possibly do.

After all, it’s okay for a wealthy former Beatle to sit in the gardens of a neo-gothic mansion for hours every day, communing with the universe...

But probably not suitable for a busy, stressed, financially pressured working person in 21st Century urban Britain.

That is... even if they WANTED to!

Because for most people, meditation is purely a spiritual practice for Buddhists, bored pop stars and pretentious silicon valley 'tech bros'.

Which is why they conclude that it's "not for them".

That's a shame.

Because meditation is actually a powerful and proven tool for focus, creativity and problem-solving.

And it's precisely a "busy, stressed, financially pressured working person in 21st Century urban Britain" who can gain the most from it!

What's more, you don't even need a lot of time in the day to try it out.

Even just 60 seconds could do the trick!

The Secret of Meditation Micro-dosing

As I'm sure you already know, it's hard to find space and time in your busy day to find peace and quiet.

Even if you do get the house to yourself, it's hard to ignore phone alerts, text messages, deliveries to your front door and other distractions.

This is why a lot of people say that they 'mean' to practice mindfulness exercises, like meditation or deep breathing... but can't ever find the time.

But the good news is, you don't have to.

I was flicking through a copy of *New Scientist* a few months ago, when I spotted a headline about 'microdosing mindfulness'.

According to new research, extraordinarily brief meditation exercises.... sometimes lasting as little as 60 seconds a day... can deliver measurable benefits.

And not just a sense of fleeting calm... but tangible improvements in:

- stress levels
- emotional regulation
- mental clarity
- and even physical markers of relaxation

These ultra-fast methods are referred to as ‘micropractices’, a term popularised by author Eli Susman, whose book *Micropractice* is due out later this year.

For example, Willoughby Britton, a professor of psychiatry and human behaviour at Brown University, has done some research into this.

She found that people who meditated for 5–10 minutes, two or three times a week, tended to sleep much better than those practising for 30 minutes a day, five days a week.

This is because longer periods of meditation can push your brain into a state of engaged alertness...

Which is useful during the day, but not ideal if you’re trying to calm yourself down at night.

So longer is not always better!

This was tested in a 2021 study led by Sarah Strohmaier at Canterbury Christ Church University.

Participants were split into three groups over two weeks:

One group meditated for 5 minutes.... another did so for 20 minutes... and a third group listened to an audiobook.

Both groups of meditators showed reduced levels of anxiety and depression compared to the audiobook group.

But the 5-minute group reported even lower stress levels than the 20-minute group.

The scientists didn’t know for sure why this happened, but they suspect that because the longer sessions were harder to sustain, the subjects’ minds wandered.

Because of this, they felt like they’d done something wrong, and failed at the task.

This counter-acted some of the stress relief they’d gained from the meditation.

On the other hand, the 5-minute meditators felt that warm glow of success, which improved their mood further.

The Best Time to Breathe Deeply

One of the surprising things about ‘micropractices’ is that they’re most effective when you’re stressed and busy!

A team led by psychologist Andreas Schwerdtfeger studied this phenomenon at the University of Graz.

His team measured heart rate variability (HRV), which is a marker of physiological stress. High HRV means you’re calm while low HRV suggests that you feel under threat.

At random points throughout the day, participants were prompted to focus on their breathing for one minute.

Even though the time period was just 60 seconds, these mini-meditations had an effect including:

- reduced stress
- increased feelings of safety
- measurably improved HRV

Most importantly, the effects were strongest when people were already overwhelmed.

Schwerdtfeger described them as “just-in-time adaptive interventions”.

In other words, rather than doing mindfulness techniques when you’re calm and relaxed, do them when you’re about to fall off the edge!

Micropractices You Can Try Today

Really, all you need to do is take one minute out of your day... ideally when the pressure is at its most intense.

It doesn’t matter what room you’re in. You could be standing next to the kettle... sitting at your desks... or hiding in the office toilet with the door locked.

When you find that minute spare, try one of the following:

- **Finger Tap Pattern.** Tap fingers of one hand in a pattern: Thumb → index → middle → ring → little. Repeat quickly for 30 seconds. Then switch to the other hand. This stabilises your attention through bilateral coordination.
- **Box breathing** - Breathe in through your nose for a count of 5 seconds. Hold for 5 seconds, then breathe out for 5 seconds. Then

hold that out-breath for another 5 seconds. Repeat this cycle three or four times.

- **The Long Sigh.** Take a deep breath in through your nose. Before exhaling, take a short second sip of air. Then exhale slowly through the mouth. Repeat this a few times.
- **Grounding exercise.** Name five things you can see, three you can hear, and one physical sensation you can feel. This works well if you can be near a window, or step outside.
- **Micro-gratitude.** Briefly acknowledge one thing that's going right in your life at the moment, even if it's small and seemingly minor. Think about it, picture it in your head, and allow yourself to feel a positive emotion about it.

These are basic techniques you can easily insert into the cracks of even the busiest day.

Even though these are very short meditations, they can deliver effects that last a lot longer than the minute you spend doing them!

Best regards

Nick