

7 Gentle Mornings

Ten quiet minutes to start the day — a one-week starter for readers over 50

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Before you start

This is a small book, deliberately. Seven mornings, ten minutes each, no equipment and nothing to buy.

Every practice here is described as a cultural and everyday habit, not as medical care. If you have a heart or lung condition, have had recent surgery, or feel unsure, show this booklet to your doctor before you begin.

Stop at once if you feel sharp pain, dizziness, chest discomfort or unusual breathlessness.

How to use this booklet

- Pick the same corner and the same time for seven days. The routine matters more than the length.
- Wear something loose. Keep a chair beside you — every practice can be done holding on.
- Breathe through your nose, slowly, and let the out-breath be a little longer than the in-breath.

DAY 1

Just breathing

About 8 minutes

1. Sit upright on a chair or on the edge of the bed, feet flat, hands resting on your thighs.
2. Breathe in for a slow count of four. Breathe out for a slow count of six.
3. Keep the shoulders soft and the jaw loose. Let the tongue rest on the roof of the mouth.
4. Do this for eight breaths, rest, then repeat once more.

If counting makes you tense, drop the numbers and simply lengthen the out-breath.

DAY 2

Shoulders and neck

About 10 minutes

1. Sit tall. Lift both shoulders towards your ears, hold for two breaths, then let them fall.
2. Repeat five times, slowly, letting the shoulders drop a little further each time.
3. Turn your head gently to the right, hold for two breaths, return to centre, then to the left.
4. Finish by rolling the shoulders backwards five times and forwards five times.

Never force a turn. Half the movement you think you should do is plenty on the first day.

DAY 3

Lifting the sky

About 10 minutes

1. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, knees soft, a chair within reach.
2. Let your hands hang, then interlace the fingers loosely in front of your body.
3. Breathe in and raise the hands, palms turning upward, until they are level with your chest.
4. Breathe out and let the hands sink back down. Repeat eight to ten times.

If raising the arms makes your shoulders creep towards your ears, stop at chest height.

DAY 4

Swaying willow

About 10 minutes

1. Stand as before, hands resting lightly on the lower belly.
2. Breathe in and lean gently to the right, letting the left side lengthen.
3. Breathe out and come back to centre. Repeat on the other side.
4. Move like a branch in a light wind — small, slow, unhurried. Six rounds each side.

Keep the movement in the waist, not the hips. Small is fine.

DAY 5

Feet and ankles

About 10 minutes

1. Sit on a chair. Lift one foot and circle the ankle slowly, five times each way.
2. Point the toes, then pull them back towards you. Repeat ten times.
3. Swap feet, then place both feet flat and press the toes down and release ten times.
4. Finish by standing and rising onto your toes ten times, holding the chair if you need to.

Good circulation in the feet makes standing practice far steadier.

DAY 6

Standing steady

About 10 minutes

1. Stand behind a chair, hands resting lightly on the back of it.
2. Lift one foot a few centimetres and hold for three breaths. Put it down.
3. Swap sides. Do four rounds each side.
4. When that feels easy, try the last round with only one fingertip on the chair.

Balance genuinely improves with practice, but only with something solid within reach.

DAY 7

Putting it together

About 12 minutes

1. Breathing, eight breaths.
2. Shoulders and neck, one round.
3. Lifting the sky, six times.
4. Swaying willow, four rounds each side.
5. Finish standing quietly for a minute, hands on the belly, breathing normally.

This is the whole practice. Twelve minutes, and it is yours to keep.

After seven days

Seven days is enough to find out whether this suits you. It is not enough to change much — that takes months, and it is meant to.

If you missed a morning, start again where you are. There is no falling behind.

Mindful Prime publishes a new guide every week. We would be glad to have you reading along.

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