

- Mental health

Five minute joy boosters

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DO A JOY AUDIT

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Five minute joy boosters

Listening to some favourite tracks can boost memories of happy moments

DO A JOY AUDIT
Write a list of five things that bring you joy in life. Then think about when you last did each of them. If it wasn't recently, this is a sign you need to prioritise your own needs more.
Make a plan to do at least one thing from your list within the next week and put it in your diary.

STRAIGHTEN UP AND SMILE
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On the flip side, if you physically act more confidently and joyfully then your mind will follow. As you get ready for the day, straighten up, pull your shoulders back and smile. By straightening up and walking tall you'll naturally start to feel more positive.

WORK YOUR WARDROBE

Experts reckon we only wear 20 per cent of our wardrobes 80 per cent of the time. What hidden gems have you forgotten about?

Start your day from a place of creativity and play by finding something joyful in your wardrobe to wear. Who would you like to be today? Life is too short not to wear the red shoes, the jazzy accessory or the silk shirt.

Be bright and colourful in your choices. Dress yourself with love and mindfulness rather than throwing on the same thing you wore yesterday.

Every day we have the choice to reinvent ourselves by choosing to do something new, so have fun.

GET GROUNDED

If you've been indoors since you woke up, take a morning break for a cuppa outside whether it's sunny or if the weather's bad. Take time away from technology to contemplate what is going on in the world around you. Put your hand on the ground and connect with its stillness and vibrancy. And pay attention to how it feels as you walk around.

Feel yourself being supported as you walk, stand, sit or lie down.

Then engage with each of your senses in turn. What can you see, smell, touch, hear and taste? This will ground you in the present and is a great antidote for over-thinking and anxiety.

SAY THANK YOU FOR THREE THINGS

Pausing to say thank you is a great way to appreciate the good in your life and spread that feeling to others.

Studies have found that grateful people feel healthier and experience fewer aches and pains. And research also indicates that grateful people sleep better and have less stress.

Don't take life or people for granted

Think of three things in your life that you're grateful for right now. Name them as you say thank you for them.

If they involve another person, perhaps you could send them a thank-you note or message – it's good to let other people know that you appreciate them.

ENJOY A HAND MASSAGE

If you spend a lot of the day doing manual work or using a keyboard, your hands and wrists will be working hard. Treat them with love. They are your most precious work tools, after all.

Pause to grip and flex your hands. If you have hand cream, use it to help soften the skin.

Massage each knuckle in turn, and all around each cuticle bed. Doing this will reduce stress and anxiety, release any muscle tension and increase hand strength.

PAUSE FOR ZAZEN

Zazen is another word for sitting meditation. It's done while sitting upright, to help us pay attention to the body and the present moment.

The aim is to become more balanced and centred.

Sit quietly and breathe. Your mind is likely to jump all over the place with thoughts, but be led by your still body and regular breathing.

The calm will come if you wait for it. Start with five minutes and see how you get on.

Frequency is more important than duration with meditation, so even one minute every day is better than 30 minutes once a week.

STAND ON ONE LEG

Balance is a key component of fitness and is linked to good brain health. To check yours, stand on one leg as you brush your teeth. This helps develop better balance, engages the core

muscles and strengthens the legs. Swap legs halfway through so the benefits are spread equally.

It's easier to add in a new habit next to something you already do, so linking this to tooth-brushing is a way to ensure that it happens regularly.

CHOOSE A LIFE SOUNDTRACK

Music has been proven to have a powerful effect on the brain. Listening to music you loved when you were younger can give your memory a boost as you reconnect with the feelings and emotions you associate with those tunes. Think about the kind of mood you'd like your playlist to evoke. Would you like to feel calmer? Or more energetic and motivated?

Put together a playlist with that in mind and also take joy in the activity of doing so.

Then when you want to access those feelings, you've got a unique soundtrack already created for it.

LEARN FROM TODAY

Every day has the potential to teach us something if we let it. Step away from any sense of guilt over whatever didn't go right today.

Instead, pause and ask yourself, what was good about today? And what will I do differently tomorrow?

What did I learn today that I can use in the future? If you like to keep a journal, write down three things you learned during your day. Gather the gifts that the day has given you and carry them like treasure into tomorrow.

■ Extracted from *How to Find Joy in Five Minutes a Day: Inspiring Ideas to Boost Your Mood Every Day*, by Joanne Mallon (Summersdale £8.99)