

Renaissance

HEALTH & FITNESS

Evidence-based practices for breathwork, sleep, movement, emotional processing, nutrition, and work-life balance.

This guide is a companion to the interactive Renaissance Health & Fitness web guide. Use it as a reference, print it out, or share it freely. Real recovery happens in small, consistent moments—not dramatic overhauls.

01 — BREATHWORK & MINDFULNESS

Breathe your way to balance

Your breath is the fastest route to your nervous system. Conscious breathing activates the parasympathetic response—signaling to your body that you are safe.

Box Breathing (4-4-4-4)

Inhale 4 · Hold 4 · Exhale 4 · Hold 4. Repeat 4–6 cycles. Ideal for acute anxiety, before meetings, or any moment of overwhelm.

4-7-8 Technique

Inhale for 4, hold for 7, exhale slowly for 8. Excellent for bedtime—can induce sleep in under 2 minutes with practice.

Physiological Sigh

Normal inhale, then a short extra sniff, then one long slow exhale. Instantly reduces anxiety. No timer needed.

Starting a daily mindfulness habit

- Start with just 2 minutes. Attach it to something you already do (morning coffee, brushing teeth).
- Use a simple anchor: focus entirely on the sensation of breathing in and out through your nose.
- When your mind wanders—gently return without judgment. That return is the practice.
- Increase by 1 minute per week until you reach 10–20 minutes, which research shows to be optimal.

Rest is not a luxury. It's medicine.

Sleep is when your brain clears stress hormones and consolidates emotional memories. Poor sleep makes everything harder; good sleep makes everything easier.

"Sleep is the single most effective thing we can do to reset our brain and body health each day."

— Matthew Walker, neuroscientist

Evening wind-down timeline

3 HRS BEFORE	Stop eating large meals. Avoid alcohol—it fragments your sleep in the second half of the night.
2 HRS BEFORE	Dim your lights to below 200 lux. This is the most powerful sleep signal you can give your brain.
1 HR BEFORE	Screens off or night mode. Wind-down ritual: light stretching, reading, journaling, or a warm shower.
AT BEDTIME	Keep your room cool (65–68°F / 18–20°C), dark, and quiet. Phone charges in another room.
MORNING	Get bright natural light within 30 minutes of waking—even 5 minutes outdoors sets your circadian clock.

Cognitive Shuffle Imagine a random word and visualize each letter as a random image. Disrupts anxious thought loops that prevent sleep.	Military Sleep Method Relax your face, drop your shoulders, let your hands go limp. Clear your mind with a relaxing scene for 10 seconds. Works in ~2 min with practice.	Naps Done Right 10–20 minutes restores alertness without grogginess. Avoid napping after 3pm. A "caffeine nap"—coffee then 20-min rest—delivers dual energy.
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Your body was built to move through stress

Exercise is one of the most powerful anxiolytics available—with no prescription required. Even small amounts of movement shift your neurochemistry within minutes.

Walking (10–30 min) Even a 10-minute walk lowers cortisol, lifts mood, and improves focus for up to 2 hours. Walk outside when possible—sunlight amplifies the benefits.	Yoga (20–45 min) Restorative and Yin yoga activate the parasympathetic nervous system. A 15-minute session before bed can transform sleep quality.	Strength Training (30–45 min) Metabolizes stress hormones and builds self-efficacy. Bodyweight exercises at home deliver many of the same benefits as the gym.
Dance (15–20 min) One of the most joyful forms of stress relief. Requires focus, releases dopamine. A playlist in your living room counts.	Swimming (20–40 min) The sensory experience of water is inherently calming. Rhythmic breathing creates a meditative state. Low-impact and joint-friendly.	Nature Walk (20–60 min) Forest bathing reduces cortisol by up to 15%, lowers blood pressure, and activates the parasympathetic nervous system.

The 2-minute rule: Commit only to 2 minutes of movement. Motivation follows action—on most days, 2 minutes becomes 20.

Feeling it is how you heal it

Emotions that aren't processed get stored in the body. Naming, exploring, and expressing what you feel—rather than suppressing or ruminating—is the key to genuine recovery.

Daily emotional wellness check-in

■ Named at least one emotion I'm feeling	1 min
■ Journalled for 5 minutes	5 min
■ Talked to someone I trust	varied
■ Practiced self-compassion (spoke to myself kindly)	2 min
■ Did one thing that brought me joy or comfort	any
■ Caught and questioned an anxious or catastrophizing thought	ongoing

Journaling prompts by emotion

Anxious: What specifically am I worried about? Is this within my control? What's one small thing I can focus on that is?

Overwhelmed: If I could only do three things today, what would matter most? What can I let go of?

Sad: What is this sadness trying to tell me? What do I need right now? How would I comfort a dear friend who felt this way?

Burnt out: What have I been giving most of my energy to? What genuinely replenishes me? What would "enough" look like?

Angry: What need of mine feels violated? How could I address this in a way I'd be proud of?

Lonely: Who do I feel most comfortable with? What stops me from reaching out? What's one small connection I could make today?

The RAIN Method Recognize · Allow · Investigate with curiosity · Nurture yourself with compassion.	Expressive Writing Write for 15–20 min about a stressful event—facts, feelings, thoughts—without editing. Measurably reduces stress hormones.	Cognitive Reframing Is this a fact or interpretation? What would I tell a friend? What's the most realistic (not best) possible outcome?
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05 — WORK-LIFE BOUNDARIES

Protect your peace like a priority

Chronic stress is often a structural problem, not a personal failing. Without intentional limits, work expands to fill every hour. Boundaries aren't selfish—they're sustainable.

Digital Limits • Set a work email off-time (e.g. 7pm–7am) and communicate it. • Remove Slack and email from your phone's home screen. • Use Do Not Disturb scheduling automatically every night. • Designate one phone-free hour per day (meals work well).	Time Boundaries • Block recovery time in your calendar before anything else. • Create a "shutdown ritual" to mark the end of the workday. • Protect at least one full day per week with no work at all. • Use time-boxing: assign fixed slots to tasks.
Communication • "Let me check my schedule and get back to you" buys thinking time. • "I'm not available after 6pm" rather than "Sorry I can't." • Batch your message replies to 2–3 set times per day. • Decline meetings that don't require your presence.	Recovery Rituals • Design a morning routine that is yours before work begins. • Take all your vacation days — they exist for your recovery. • Protect lunch — eat away from your desk at least 3x per week. • Schedule "nothing" time: unstructured space with no agenda.

Phrases for saying no without guilt

- "I need to check a few things—can I get back to you tomorrow?"
- "I'm at capacity right now and couldn't give this the attention it deserves."
- "That falls outside my working hours. I'll be available Monday."
- "I'm not able to" is a complete sentence. You don't need a reason.

Feed your nervous system

The B vitamin family is essential to stress resilience and nervous system function. A food-based B complex—derived from whole food sources—is generally better absorbed than synthetic isolates.

Garden of Life B Complex A solid food-based formulation made from organic whole foods. Delivers the full spectrum of B vitamins in naturally occurring forms the body recognizes and uses efficiently.	Solgar B Complex A long-standing, high-quality brand with a strong reputation for purity and potency testing. Look for their Megasorb or B-Complex with Vitamin C formulas.
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Why food-based B vitamins are different

- Folate (B9) from food is better utilized than folic acid, the common synthetic form.
- B12 as methylcobalamin (food-based) is preferred over cyanocobalamin (synthetic) for most people.
- Food-based products are less likely to cause nausea or the "neon yellow" effect of high-dose synthetics.
- Always take B complex with food—components absorb better alongside a meal.

Getting B vitamins from food & organ supplements

Organ meats are among the most nutrient-dense foods available—particularly for B12, B2, folate, and B6. If sourcing and preparation feel like a barrier, a quality organ complex bridges the gap.

Organ meats Liver, heart, and kidney from grass-fed animals are extraordinarily rich in B vitamins, iron, CoQ10, and zinc. Even 2–3 servings per week can significantly shift your nutritional status.	Paleovalley Organ Complex A convenient capsule form of grass-fed beef liver, heart, and kidney. Sourced transparently and freeze-dried to preserve nutrients. Great if you're not ready to cook organ meats yourself.	Trace Minerals Research A quality brand with organ-based and mineral-rich formulations and rigorous sourcing standards. Worth exploring for broader mineral support as well.
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Other excellent food sources of B vitamins

- Eggs (pasture-raised) — rich in B12, B2, and biotin.
- Wild-caught salmon & sardines — excellent B12 and B6.
- Lentils & legumes — rich in folate (B9) and thiamine (B1).

- Nutritional yeast — popular plant-based B12 source; look for fortified versions.
- Sunflower seeds — one of the best plant sources of B5, which directly supports adrenal and cortisol regulation.

07 — ESSENTIAL OILS

The power of plant aromatics

Essential oils interact directly with the olfactory system and limbic brain—the emotional processing center—producing real, measurable shifts in mood, anxiety, and nervous system tone. Quality matters enormously.

doTERRA Adaptive blend Designed for stress and emotional resilience. Contains wild orange, lavender, copaiba, spearmint, magnolia, rosemary, neroli, and sweetgum. Diffuse, wear on wrists, or add to a bath.	doTERRA Balance blend A grounding blend of spruce, ho wood, frankincense, blue tansy, blue chamomile, and osmanthus. Earthy, warm, and centering for moments of feeling scattered or overwhelmed.
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How to use essential oils for stress

- Diffusion — 3–5 drops in a water diffuser in your workspace or bedroom.
- Topical (diluted) — 1–2 drops with carrier oil, apply to wrists, temples, or back of neck.
- Palms inhalation — 1 drop in palms, rub together, cup over nose, breathe deeply for 5–10 breaths.
- Bath — 5–10 drops in a tablespoon of carrier oil or bath salts first, then add to warm water.

What to look for in an essential oil company

SOURCING	Where are the plants grown? Single-origin, wildcrafted, or organically farmed plants produce oils with more complete chemical profiles.
TESTING	Look for GC/MS (gas chromatography/mass spectrometry) testing on every batch. The best companies publish these results publicly.
TRANSPARENCY	Can they tell you exactly where a specific bottle came from? Reputable companies have traceability built in and aren't evasive about production.
NO FILLERS	Pure essential oils contain only the plant extract. Avoid products with synthetic fragrances, undisclosed carrier oils, or vague 'natural ingredients' language.

Dr. Robert Pappas

One of the foremost essential oil chemists in the world. His own line of oils is crafted to the highest analytical standards—well worth exploring for research-level quality confidence.

Other quality companies

Beyond doTERRA and Dr. Pappas, look into Eden Botanicals, Floracopeia, and Tisserand. Each has a strong track record for sourcing integrity and transparency.

Not sure where to start with essential oils?

doTERRA not your thing? That's completely fine—there are excellent alternatives. Reach out to schedule a call and walk through the options together.

This guide is for general wellness purposes and does not replace professional medical or mental health support. If you are experiencing severe or persistent stress, please reach out to a qualified healthcare provider.