



Tired but Wired

Prepared for Alex · Downshift

Hi Alex, you came in with this on your mind: "I am exhausted but I cannot switch off." Here is your plan, built from your answers, and yours to keep. This is not a label or a diagnosis. It is a clear, personal place to start.

AT A GLANCE

Running on empty and still can't switch off, exhausted but buzzing.

You might notice

- Exhausted but buzzing; tension on top of fatigue
- Wired at night, foggy by day; crash the moment you stop
- A low hum of urgency; mind won't power down at bedtime
- Depleted yet on-edge, thin-skinned, anxious"flat
- Resting without actually resting

What helps

a reliable downshift, lowered inputs, safety, and a steady daily rhythm signalling the day is winding down.

Go gentle on

late high-intensity exercise, stimulating breathwork, 'optimize your evening' framing, heavy emotional digging late.

You also lean toward Restless / Flight, a blend, which is common.

Your reset profile

Your answers point most clearly to one pattern: Tired but Wired. Your body is running warm and braced even when you are worn out, so rest does not quite land and sleep does not quite come. You also lean toward Restless / Flight, so you are a blend, which is very common. Your plan leads with Tired but Wired and borrows from the restless side on the days that feel more like that.

Holding both: lead with the Tired but Wired practices, and on a day that feels more restless and racing, borrow from that side with a brisk walk or a quick discharge before you try to settle. You are allowed to be more than one thing.

Why this fits your answers

You pointed to the tiredness sitting in your body as a wired, humming tension, and in your head a mind that will not slow down at night. Taken together, that is the Tired but Wired picture. Here is the part most tools miss: when you are wired and tired at once, being told to simply relax or to push harder both backfire. You take the edge off first, and then let rest follow.

How to use your plan

Five parts, one system. You do not do them all at once, you grow into them.

1 Your 3 core exercises

Your anchors, the few moves matched to your pattern. Learn these first.

2 Your 30-day plan

The order to build them in, one small step a week. Begin at Week 1, today.

3 Your daily rhythm

How a normal day can hold them: morning, midday, evening. A template, not a rule.

4 In the moment

Quick resets for when stress spikes. Learn your early signs and keep these close.

5 Your toolbox

Everything else, to swap in once the basics feel easy.

If you only do one thing: The Long Exhale, once a day. That is enough to start.

Your 3 core exercises

Think of these three as your anchors: the moves matched to your pattern. You do not need anything else to start. Practise them when you are calm so they are ready when you are not. They shape your daily rhythm, and your 30-day plan builds them into a habit, one week at a time.

Your three starter exercises are The Long Exhale, The Evening Downshift, Hand on Heart. They were chosen for Tired but Wired specifically: body-based, imagery-free, and led by the most evidence-backed option. Start with just the first one. The rest of your toolbox is there for when you want it, not all at once.

START HERE

1. The Long Exhale · ~3 min · Well-supported

Take the edge off, anywhere, in a couple of minutes.

A longer out-breath than in-breath is the most reliable, evidence-backed part of calming breathing, simple, portable, hard to get wrong.

1. Breathe in through the nose for about 4.
2. Out through nose or pursed lips for about 6.
3. Keep the exhale longer than the inhale.
4. Continue 2–4 minutes, softening shoulders and jaw.

When to use it: Braced, wound-up, or close to snapping. Portable, do it anywhere.

Easier version: Drop the counting; just breathe out a bit slower than in.

Prefer another? Same job: The Physiological Sigh, Box Breathing. Swap any in.

Safety: If counting makes you anxious or lightheaded, breathe normally. Not a substitute for care if you have frequent panic or breathing problems.

2. The Evening Downshift · ~15 min · Promising

The off-ramp a wired-at-night system is missing.

A consistent low-input wind-down gives an over-revved system a gradual off-ramp instead of 'on' straight to 'lights out'. It doesn't force sleep, it stops you fighting it.

1. Dim the lights, screens away, a softer signal the day is closing.
2. Lower inputs (quieter, slower, nothing demanding).
3. One calming tool you like (long exhale, humming, PMR, legs up).
4. Same most nights, so the body learns the off-ramp.

When to use it: 30–60 minutes before bed, especially exhausted-but-wired when sleep is a fight.

Easier version: Screens off plus three slow exhales in dim light.

Prefer another? Same job: The Warm Drink Ritual, The Connection Reset. Swap any in.

Safety: Skip stimulating or high-intensity exercise late. Severe, persistent insomnia for weeks ' a professional.

3. Hand on Heart · ~2 min · Promising

A bit of warmth toward yourself.

Warm, steady touch plus a naturally slower breath; many find a kind physical gesture toward themselves settling, especially when no one else is around.

1. One or both hands flat on the centre of the chest.
2. Feel the warmth and light pressure.
3. Let breathing slow, a long easy exhale.
4. Stay 1–2 minutes on the contact and warmth.

When to use it: Shaky, alone, self-critical, needing some warmth toward yourself.

Easier version: Just rest a warm hand on the chest for a few breaths.

Prefer another? Same job: Tense-and-Release (PMR), Butterfly Tap. Swap any in.

Safety: Turning attention inward can briefly bring up emotion, that's normal; go gently, stop if it's too much.

Your 30-day plan • Downshift

Downshifting, safety, rhythm, not productivity, not heavy digging late. Move earlier in the day; protect the evening.

Treat each week as an experiment: test it, notice what helps, and swap anything that does not fit from your toolbox.

Week 1: Awareness & Safety (3–4 min/day)

Start smaller than you think. One practice, every day.

- Practise The Long Exhale once a day, right after something you already do (after you brush your teeth, before your first coffee). Tiny and repeatable beats long and once.

If too much: Do the easier version: Drop the counting; just breathe out a bit slower than in.

Week 2: Regulation Basics (5–7 min/day)

Make it a habit, then add the second tool.

- Keep The Long Exhale as your daily anchor, and add The Evening Downshift when you feel you need it.

If too much: Keep only The Long Exhale. One practice still counts, and missing a day is not failing.

Week 3: Capacity & Consistency (8–12 min/day)

Build it into your day, morning and evening.

- Anchor with The Long Exhale, and weave in The Evening Downshift and Hand on Heart across your day and evening, wherever they fit best.

If too much: Drop back to The Long Exhale plus the one other you reach for most.

Week 4: Integration & Personal Rhythm (as needed/day)

Keep what works. Make the plan yours.

- Keep the one that helps most as a non-negotiable anchor; use the others as needed. If a tool does not fit you, swap in an alternative from your toolbox. This is your plan now.

If too much: Still hard most days for two weeks or more? See the "when to involve a professional" note below.

On a hard day, shrink it. Drop to the 5-minute version below and do just one practice. One practice still counts, and missing a day is not failing.

Your daily rhythm (10 minutes (realistic default))

Morning: The Long Exhale (4 min)

Midday: Hand on Heart (3 min)

Evening: The Evening Downshift (3 min)

In the moment

First, catch it early. Stress has a tipping point, and the earlier you notice the climb, the smaller the reset you need. Your tells are in the snapshot under "You might notice"; pick the two or three that are most you, and treat them as your cue to start.

YOUR RESET CARD · TIRED-BUT-WIRED RESET

1. Breathe out longer than in, for two minutes.
2. Dim the lights; put the screens away.
3. Hand on heart: 'you can come down now'.
4. One small wind-down you'll repeat tonight.

When you feel Tired but Wired

Exhausted but can't switch off.

Don't: add more stimulation · force sleep by lying there trying harder · trying to think it all through right now

1. Shake out your hands and arms loosely for about 45 sec, like flicking off water
2. the Long Exhale for about 90 sec
3. a short Evening Downshift

Prefer stillness? Physiological Sigh ' short Progressive Muscle Relaxation ' Evening Downshift.

When you feel Activated

Wound-up, racing, restless, anxious.

Don't: force calm first · open ten tabs of advice · pile on breath-holds

1. Active Release or a brisk Slow Walk, discharge first
2. the Long Exhale, about 90 sec
3. 5-4-3-2-1, name what's real

No room to move? Wall Push ' Physiological Sigh ' Single-Task Reset.

Your toolbox

All 26 exercises, grouped by what they are for, each with its steps, an easier version, and an honest evidence label. Your 3 core exercises above are part of this kit too.

Build your own day. Pick one tool to move or activate in the morning, one to calm a spike, and one to wind down at night. Test a week, keep what helps, swap what does not.

Calm the body

Breathing tools for an anxious spike, when you want to bring the volume down.

The Physiological Sigh · ~2 min · Well-supported

A quick way to feel calmer in the moment.

1. Gentle inhale through your nose.
2. Add a second short sip of air at the top.
3. One long, slow, unforced exhale through the mouth.
4. Repeat for 1–3 minutes, no straining.

When: The instant you notice the buzz or an anxious spike; a clean first step at night.

Easier: Just make every exhale a little longer than the inhale; skip the second sip.

Safety: If it makes you dizzy or more anxious (especially with a panic history), stop and breathe normally. Don't over-breathe.

Box Breathing · ~3 min · Promising

A structured pattern to steady a busy mind.

1. Breathe in for a slow count of about 4 seconds.
2. Hold for about 4.
3. Breathe out for about 4.
4. Hold for about 4, even and unstrained.

When: You want a structured pattern to steady a busy mind.

Easier: Drop the holds, in for 4, out for 4.

Safety: Breath-holding makes some people anxious or lightheaded (not ideal with a panic history); shorten or remove the holds; not while driving.

Humming & Long Tones · ~2 min · Experimental

A soft, soothing wind-down without counting.

1. Gentle nasal inhale.
2. Hum a low, comfortable note on the out-breath as long as it naturally lasts.
3. Notice the soft buzzing in chest, throat, face.
4. Repeat 1–2 minutes, quiet and unforced.

When: A soft wind-down, or a long easy exhale without counting; pleasant before sleep.

Easier: Sigh out loud on a soft 'ahh'.

Safety: Gentle and low-risk. If the humming makes you lightheaded, ease off and breathe normally.

Discharge & release

For when you feel charged or wired and the energy needs somewhere to go.

Cool Water on the Face · ~1 min · Promising

A strong physical interruption for a sharp spike.

1. Cool-to-cold water in a bowl, or a wet cloth.
2. Briefly dip the face (eyes/cheeks) or press the cloth.
3. Hold a few seconds, slow exhale.
4. Lift, breathe, repeat once or twice.

When: A sharp panic or anger spike tipping out of control.

Easier: A cold pack or cold can against the cheeks for 15 seconds.

Safety: **CARDIAC CAVEAT:** this slows the heart, if you have any heart condition, arrhythmia, or are pregnant, skip it entirely and use the long exhale or orienting instead. Cool, not icy; never hold your breath submerged; don't do it if faint.

Move & activate

For when you feel flat, foggy, or stuck. Action comes before motivation here.

A Short, Slow Walk · ~8 min · Well-supported

Settle through rhythm and a little fresh air.

1. Outside if you can, no earbuds.
2. Easy, even pace for 5–10 minutes.
3. Attention on footsteps, breeze, the ground.
4. When the mind sprints, return to the rhythm, not 'emptiness'.

When: After a stressful stretch, restless energy, or a second rung out of flat and foggy.

Easier: Step outside and stand in daylight for 2 minutes, or walk to the end of the street.

Safety: Low-risk; with a heart condition, injury, or when very depleted, keep it gentle.

Morning Light & Movement · ~7 min · Well-supported

A soft, undemanding way to start the day.

1. Within an hour of waking, get daylight on your face.
2. A few minutes of easy movement.
3. Undemanding, no targets.
4. One slow breath to close.

When: First thing, especially when you wake flat, foggy, or braced.

Easier: Open the curtains and stand in the light for 60 seconds.

Safety: Never look directly at the sun. Unbearable mornings for weeks ' raise it with a professional.

One Small Action · ~3 min · Well-supported

The smallest possible step back into motion.

1. Pick one tiny, concrete action (make the bed, fill a glass, open one email).
2. Make it almost silly not to do.
3. Do it before you feel like it, two minutes counts.
4. Notice any shift; let one lead to the next only if it does.

When: Motivation at zero, everything feels like too much, waiting to 'feel ready'.

Easier: Shrink it, not 'tidy the kitchen' but 'one cup in the sink'.

Safety: Gentle activation, not 'push through'. Persistent inability to do even small things ' involve a professional.

Active Release · ~4 min · Well-supported

Give a stress surge somewhere to go.

1. Move briskly 2–5 minutes (fast walk, stairs, jacks, push a wall, hard shake-out).
2. Genuinely effortful but doable.
3. Let breath come naturally, don't hold it.
4. Stop, stand still, let breathing slow, notice the settle.

When: Charged, irritable, restless adrenaline you need to discharge fast.

Easier: 20 seconds of vigorous arm-shaking or hard marching.

Safety: Skip vigorous exertion with a heart condition or injury, or late evening (it can wake you up).

Ground & orient

For when you feel floaty, spiralling, or far from the room you are in.

Orient to the Room · ~2 min · Experimental

Come back into the room without anything physical.

1. Slowly turn your head, let your gaze travel.
2. Rest your eyes on five ordinary, neutral objects; name each quietly.
3. Notice colour, edge, light, no rush.
4. One slightly slower breath after the fifth.

When: Gone numb or far-away, or anxiety climbing and you want back in the room.

Easier: Name three things you can see, slowly, aloud.

Safety: If it makes you feel more dissociated, switch to feet-on-floor or a slow exhale.

Feet on the Floor · ~2 min · Experimental

A discreet way back into your body.

1. Both feet flat.
2. Press down; feel the ground push back (heels, balls, toes).
3. Feel where your weight stacks through your legs and the chair.
4. One slow breath; stay with being held by the ground.

When: Untethered, floaty, spiralling, up-in-your-head, discreet enough for a meeting.

Easier: Bare feet on the floor for a few breaths.

Safety: If body-sensation focus makes you anxious, switch to orienting (attention outward).

5-4-3-2-1 · ~3 min · Experimental

Ground a racing mind with zero imagination required.

1. Five things you can see.
2. Four things you can hear.
3. Three things you can feel touching you.
4. Two you can smell, and one slow breath.

When: Spiralling thoughts, an anxiety spike, pre-sleep mind-racing.

Easier: Just 'five things you can see', slowly, by name.

Safety: If counting feels stressful, just name a few things you see at your pace.

One Thing at a Time · ~3 min · Promising

Calm through focus, not stillness.

1. Stop; one slow breath.
2. Pick the single next concrete action.
3. Close or hide everything else.
4. Do just that one thing, then choose the next single thing.

When: Mind scattered across ten loops, 'busy but getting nothing done'.

Easier: Write only the very next action on a sticky note; rest out of sight.

Safety: Keep it a settling tool, not a productivity stick.

Soothe & settle

Gentle, body-based comfort for when you need to feel safe again.

Tense-and-Release (PMR) · ~8 min · Promising

Give a clenched body a clear experience of letting go.

1. Start at the feet, tense firmly (not painfully) ~5 seconds.
2. Release all at once; notice the difference for ~10 seconds.
3. Work upward (calves ' jaw ' face).
4. Finish with slow breaths, body heavy.

When: Tension in the body when your head can't talk it down; good before sleep.

Easier: Just hands, shoulders, and jaw.

Safety: Don't tense injured or painful areas.

Butterfly Tap · ~2 min · Experimental

A simple left-right rhythm many people find soothing.

1. Cross arms over the chest, hands near opposite shoulders.
2. Tap alternating left then right: right hand to your left shoulder, left hand to your right, about one per second.
3. Slow and even; breathe normally.
4. Continue 1–2 minutes, attention on the rhythm.

When: Anxiety spikes, or winding down when the mind won't stop.

Easier: Tap slowly on the thighs.

Safety: Present-moment calming only, do not use to work through traumatic memories alone (that's a trained therapist's work). If it brings up intense memories, stop.

Gentle Shaking · ~2 min · Experimental

Loosen tension stuck in the body.

1. Knees soft; gently bounce and shake hands and arms.
2. Let it spread (wrists ' arms ' shoulders ' legs).
3. Loose and easy, like shaking off water; breath free.
4. After 1–2 minutes, slow down, stand still, notice the settle.

When: Tension or charged energy stuck in the body; want to physically loosen.

Easier: Shake out hands and arms for 30 seconds.

Safety: Can bring up strong emotion or overwhelm, especially with a trauma history, go gently, keep it brief, stop if flooded or out of control. Skip vigorous shaking with relevant injuries.

Wall Push · ~2 min · Promising

A contained, quiet discharge without leaving the room.

1. Arm's length from a solid wall, palms flat.
2. Push firmly as if to move it, 5–10 seconds.
3. Feel the effort through arms, shoulders, legs; exhale as you push.
4. Release, shake the arms loose, notice the settle; repeat 2–3x.

When: Charged, irritable, agitated, want a contained discharge.

Easier: Press palms hard together at chest height, or interlace and pull, for a few seconds.

Safety: Go easy with shoulder/wrist/back/heart issues; with high blood pressure keep it light and don't hold your breath.

Quick Body Scan · ~5 min · Promising

Notice tension you'd otherwise miss.

1. Bring attention to your feet, notice warmth, weight, contact, or nothing.
2. Move up slowly (legs ' belly ' chest ' arms ' shoulders ' face).
3. Notice each without changing it, if tense, let it be tense.
4. Finish with slow breaths, whole body resting.

When: Winding down, or out of touch with what the body feels; good before sleep.

Easier: Scan three zones, belly, shoulders, jaw.

Safety: For some (especially trauma or body-based anxiety) inward attention increases distress, if that's you, use orienting instead; don't force it.

Sensory Reset · ~4 min · Promising

A recovery gap before you hit the top.

1. Step to a quieter, dimmer spot (bathroom, stairwell, car).
2. Lower inputs, dim or close the eyes, soften sound, screen face-down.
3. Don't fill the gap; 3–5 minutes or less.
4. A few slow exhales, then re-enter on purpose, one task, one conversation.

When: Overstimulated and frayed, when one more input might tip you.

Easier: Close the eyes, palms over the ears, 30 seconds.

Safety: Watch the recovery"avoidance line, steering clear of things you can manage feeds overwhelm.

Clear the mind

Get the swirl out of your head: name it, write it, set it down.

The Brain Dump · ~4 min · Promising

Get the swirl out of your head.

1. Any paper and pen (paper beats a screen).
2. 3–5 minutes, write everything, no order, editing, or judging.
3. Don't solve anything; just get it out.
4. Put the page aside.

When: Head crammed with loops, worries, to-dos, especially the night-time racing kind.

Easier: A bare list of words or short phrases.

Safety: If writing pulls you deeper into rumination, set a timer, stop when it rings, and switch to movement or grounding.

Name It to Tame It · ~2 min · Promising

A clear word creates a little space.

1. Pause, what am I actually feeling?
2. One or two plain words ('anxious', 'angry', 'overwhelmed').
3. Say it simply ('This is anxiety').
4. One slow breath; notice any gap.

When: A strong feeling has you in its grip and naming it might create space.

Easier: Silently name the feeling in one word.

Safety: For noticing in the moment, not digging into painful material alone, if it opens something big, take it to a professional.

Set It Down · ~3 min · Experimental

Set a worry aside on purpose.

1. Acknowledge it plainly ('This is here, and it matters').
2. Write it down, or set a specific time you will return to it ('tomorrow at 10').
3. Tell yourself you're choosing when, not ignoring it.
4. When it returns, remind yourself it's set down; return to the task.

When: A worry keeps intruding and you can't deal with it now (night, work, mid-task).

Easier: Say 'Not now, later', write it on a scrap.

Safety: For everyday worry, not trauma, flashbacks, or intrusive memories, those alongside a professional. If a thought won't stay down and is highly distressing, reach out.

Wind down & connect

Your evening off-ramp, and small moments of real contact.

The Warm Drink Ritual · ~7 min · Experimental

A small warm anchor of care.

1. A warm, caffeine-free drink.
2. Hold the cup in both hands; feel the warmth before drinking.
3. Sit with no screen; take it slowly, warmth, smell, taste.
4. A small, deliberate pause, not a gulp at the desk.

When: A small warm anchor in a flat, foggy, or frayed moment; a marker between work and rest.

Easier: Hold a warm mug in both hands for a minute before drinking.

Safety: Keep it caffeine-free in the evening. No health claims.

The Connection Reset · ~5 min · Promising

A small thread of safe contact.

1. Pick one safe, easy person (low stakes, no performance).
2. Small contact, a short message, quick call, sitting near someone.
3. Keep it light, not unloading.
4. Notice whether you feel slightly less alone.

When: Gone flat, withdrawn, or isolated and the pull is to retreat further.

Easier: One short, low-effort message, even an emoji.

Safety: Choose genuinely safe people. If you tend to people-please, notice the urge to make it about their needs, this is for you. Not a substitute for professional support if deeply isolated.

Reflection prompts

- When did the buzz rise today, and what helped it settle?
- What in my evening winds me up, and what could replace it?
- Did moving earlier change how the night went?

When to involve a professional

- Thoughts of harming yourself, or that life isn't worth living, contact a professional or your local emergency number now, not later.
- Stress or low mood most of the day, most days, for two weeks or more.
- Panic, flashbacks, or trauma symptoms that feel out of your control.
- Sleep, appetite, or functioning at work/home seriously disrupted for weeks.
- Using alcohol, food, or other things more and more just to cope.
- Any physical symptom that worries you, chest pain, breathlessness, get it checked medically; these tools are not a substitute for care.

The evidence behind this

An honest word on the science: these are low-risk coping tools that can help you feel calmer and more present in the moment, and the simple act of pausing to breathe or move is itself worth something. What the research does NOT support is the idea that any of this 'rewires' or 'resets' your nervous system, cures anxiety, or replaces professional care. Where a technique has solid human studies behind it, we say so; where it's popular but the evidence is thin, we say that too. We've deliberately dropped the fashionable 'vagus nerve' and 'polyvagal' framing you'll see elsewhere, that theory is scientifically contested. You're paying for a clear, personalized, honest starting point, not magic.

If a practice ever feels like too much, ease off and try a gentler one, or simply rest. None of this is a substitute for professional care.

Sources

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Start with one thing today, not all three. Small and repeated beats big and once, and missing a day is not failing, it is being a person. Follow the 30-day plan loosely. It is an experiment in noticing what helps you. You found your pattern, Alex. Now you get to work with it instead of against it.

Koen, The Good Life

The Good Life and this assessment are educational, self-help tools for everyday stress and nervous-system regulation in the everyday sense, feeling calmer, steadier, and more present. They are not medical advice, therapy, diagnosis, or treatment, and not a substitute for care from a qualified professional. This assessment does not diagnose any condition; it offers a plain-language starting map based on your answers, which you may or may not recognize. The exercises are low-risk coping tools that can help you feel calmer in the moment, they do not cure, heal, or 'rewire' anything, and results vary. If you're in crisis, having thoughts of harming yourself, or dealing with trauma, a diagnosed condition, or symptoms that worry you, please reach out to a licensed professional or your local emergency services.