

Stress Reduction: 10 Minute Mental HIIT

We know and understand the benefits we get from HIIT sessions for our physical health but have you ever tried a 10 minute mental HIIT session? HIIT (High-Intensity Interval Training) is a form of exercise that involves short periods of intense or explosive anaerobic exercise with brief recovery periods until the point of exhaustion. Quick cognitive exercises can be very helpful in training us to be more resilient and change our mindset, particularly if we feel stuck in a mental rut.

Here Are Some Ways You Can Practice Mental HIIT

1. Gratitude

Sometimes when we say thank you we are on autopilot. This might be when a stranger holds open a door or the cashier hands us a receipt. However, how do you feel when you say thank you for the larger acts of kindness you receive? Here is a quick exercise for you to try:

- Start by observing. Notice the thank yous you say. Is it a habitual response? Is it an afterthought? How are you feeling when you express thanks in small transactions? Stressed, uptight, a little absent-minded? Are you already physically moving on to your next interaction?
- Pick one interaction a day. When your instinct to say “thank you” arises, stop for a moment and take note. Can you name what you feel grateful for, even beyond the gesture that’s been extended? Then say thank you.



2. Breathing

When we feel our bodies tense up in a heated situation, it can be hard to calm down. However, breathing is a quick fix to lower your heart rate and reduce the cortisol levels in your body. Box breathing is a deep breathing exercise that works to distract your mind and calm your nervous system:

- Close your eyes.
- Breathe in through your nose whilst counting to four.
- Hold for four seconds.
- Breathe out for four seconds.
- Repeat this for one minute.
- Notice how your body feels after.



3. Positive Experiences

Having things to look forward to is important for positive mental wellbeing. These can be big obvious things (a holiday) but also small things (seeing a new film with a friend). In a journal, note down the things that either you are looking forward to, or plan some things to look forward to.

- Something to look forward to this week.
- Something to look forward to in the next 3 months.
- Something to look forward to next year.

