

How to Use This Deck

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a practical and action-oriented approach for quickly building positive emotions and meaningful engagement in your life. You'll find three powerful types of practices in *The CBT Deck*:

- THINK: Cognitive strategies for training your thoughts to serve you well
- ACT: Behavioral techniques for choosing actions that build the life you want to live
- BE: Mindfulness practices for experiencing greater presence and connection in each moment

These three approaches overlap and will work together to reinforce one another.

For maximum benefit, use one card each day, and be sure to practice the techniques rather than simply reading the cards.

You can carry the day's card with you or post it somewhere visible to remind you of what you're working on.

If you ever need additional motivation, remind yourself of the positive changes you're looking forward to that will make your efforts worthwhile.

With repeated practice, you'll find yourself using these techniques more automatically. I'm wishing you all the best along the way.



About the Author

Seth J. Gillihan, PhD,

specializes in cognitive behavioral and mindfulness-based treatments for anxiety, depression, insomnia, and other conditions. Dr. Gillihan has written and lectured nationally and internationally on CBT and how the brain is involved in regulating our moods. He hosts the weekly *Think Act Be* podcast, which features conversations on living more fully. You can find Dr. Gillihan at sethgillihan.com and on his PsychologyToday.com blog, *Think Act Be*.

© 2019 Seth J. Gillihan. All rights reserved.

Design by Amy Rubenzer

Published by PESI Publishing

pesipublishing.com

ISBN: 9781683732464

————— *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy*

THE CBT DECK

for Clients and Therapists

101

Practices to Improve Thoughts,
Be in the Moment & Take
Action in Your Life

Seth J. Gillihan, PhD

Countering All-or-Nothing Thoughts

Pay attention for times today
when you're thinking in
black-or-white terms, such as,
"Nothing is going my way."

Consider whether the situation
is actually that extreme.

For example, how many things
in reality actually are going
the way you want them to?

Practice seeing shades of
gray in each experience.

THINK

Give Yourself Credit

Notice how you explain the things that go well in your life today.

Do you give yourself credit for the role you played, or are you quick to chalk it up to luck or other external forces?

Practice recognizing the responsibility you have in your successes.

THINK

Training Your Morning Thoughts

Our negative trains of thought are often waiting for us when we wake up in the morning.

Write down 3 positive and accurate thoughts that you can read and repeat to yourself before you get out of bed tomorrow.

For example, list some things that are likely to go right today.

Practice filling your mind with thoughts that serve you well.

THINK

Be Your Own Friend

When you make a mistake today, no matter how big or how small, treat yourself like you're someone you love dearly.

How would you respond if they did something similar?

Notice how this response compares to your typical self-talk when you mess up, both in terms of what you say and how you say it.

How does it feel to be friendlier toward yourself?

THINK

What Was I Thinking?

Whenever you experience a surge of strong emotion today, stop and ask yourself, "What thought just went through my mind?"

Thoughts like, "I'll never succeed" can lead to sadness, whereas thoughts like, "They really like me" might lead to joy.

Write down 3 examples of what you find as you practice recognizing the thought → feeling connection.

THINK

Limits of Your Control

When you're worried about something today, write down 3 things about it that you can control, and 3 things you can't.

For example, you can control how much you rest and hydrate when you're sick, but you can't control exactly when you'll feel better.

Focus your efforts on what's in your power, and let go of fruitless mental efforts that try to force the outcome you want.

THINK

Observe Your Morning Thoughts

Place a pen and notebook
next to your bed, along
with this card.

When you wake up tomorrow,
take a few minutes to observe the
thoughts that greet the day.

What are their focus
and their tone?

How hopeful or
pessimistic are they?
Write down what you notice.

How might your thoughts
be setting the stage for
how your day will go?

If you like, choose another
card to practice today.

THINK

Should You Worry?

It's hard to let go of chronic worries, in part because our minds often tell us we need to worry about something and that worrying is in some way useful—even if we can't control the outcome.

Notice if this belief is driving your worry today, and give yourself permission to let go of unproductive trains of thought.

THINK

Angry “Shoulds”

Anger toward others is often driven by the thought that they *should* behave differently (e.g., “This driver should be going faster”).

Often, though, these statements express wishes, not facts about what the person has done wrong.

Try stating your preferences (e.g., “I wish this driver would speed up”) instead of accusing the person of wrongdoing.

Notice any changes in your experience of anger.

THINK

Emotional Reasoning

Just as thoughts can drive feelings, feelings can influence thoughts.

Notice today if your expectations are based on how you feel (e.g., "I feel X so it must be true").

For example, if you are feeling anxious, do you assume that means something bad is going to happen?

Remind yourself that your feelings may have nothing to do with what will actually happen.

THINK

Thoughts Are Not Facts

We often assume our thoughts are simply observations about what is true. "I'm pathetic" or "Nobody cares about me" can feel as real as, "The sky is blue."

Be on the lookout today for interpretations you're making about yourself, others, or the world.

Realize that these thoughts are stories your mind has created that may or may not be true.

THINK

Assume the Best

Most likely someone will do something today that annoys you.

When that happens, aim to make the kindest possible interpretation of the person's actions.

For example, if someone cuts you off in traffic, you might tell yourself that they're in a hurry to see a dying loved one in the hospital.

See how this reaction affects your peace of mind.

THINK

Expect the Best

When you find yourself worrying that something won't turn out well, try making a positive shift in your thinking.

Instead of assuming the worst, ask yourself, "What if it turns out great?"

As long as the outcome is uncertain, it's better to assume it will go well and to focus your attention on what you actually can control.

THINK

What Are the Odds?

When you're worried
about something bad happening
today, think about how likely
that outcome really is.

How often has it happened before?

Are there more likely outcomes?

Most of the time, the things
we worry about never end up
happening, so the anxiety
we experience causes
us unnecessary suffering.

THINK

How Bad Would It Be?

Look for times today when
you're worrying about a
possible catastrophe.

Would it be as bad as you fear?

Worse than bad?

The worst day of your life?

Insurmountable?

Or would it be a problem you
simply need to handle?

Picture yourself using all
your resources to cope
with it if it were to occur.

THINK

Permission-Giving Thoughts

When you're tempted to do something today that you know isn't in your best interest, look for thoughts that would enable the unhelpful behavior (e.g., "I've had a long day so I should skip the gym").

Question whether these thoughts are true, and if there's a more accurate and beneficial way of thinking (e.g., "Going to the gym helps me unwind after a long day").

THINK

Do It Now

When you find yourself putting off something you need to do, notice if you're telling yourself you'll do it "when you feel like it."

If you don't feel like doing it now, then you probably won't want to do it later either.

See what it's like to take care of it right away, regardless of your feelings, just because it needs to be done.

THINK

Letting Go of Worry About Time

The next time you're feeling stressed that you may be late for something, open yourself to the possibility that you could indeed be late.

It could happen, for any number of reasons.

It will be whatever time it is when you arrive at your destination.

What do you need to focus on in the meantime?

THINK

Question Your “Shoulds”

When you feel a difficult emotion today, like anxiety or disappointment, notice if you're making “should” statements about yourself, such as, “I should be there by now” or “I should be a better parent.”

Notice what happens when you reframe these statements as, “I would like to...” instead.

What does this shift in wording do to your feelings of stress or self-blame?

THINK

What Do They Need?

As you interact with others
today, ask yourself,
“What does this person
need right now?”

Are they hungry? Exhausted?
Overwhelmed? Lonely?

You can ask this of anyone,
from a stranger to an
intimate partner.

It may be especially powerful
to do so during a disagreement.

Does this question
affect your interaction?

Is there anything you can
do to help meet their need?

THINK

Finding Contentment Within

Notice today when
you're telling yourself,
"I'll be happy when..." or
"I can't be happy because..."

We usually blame our feelings
on our circumstances—our
health, our income, how
others treat us—but people
find ways to be content in
the worst conditions,
and miserable in the best.

True contentment lies in
opening to your life just as it is.

It can start right now,
exactly where you are.

THINK

Recognize Self-Limiting Beliefs

No matter where you are, there's
a next step that awaits you.

What have you been holding
back from doing because
you're afraid you'll fail?

Pay attention for
self-limiting beliefs:

"I'm not ready.
I'm too young (or old)."

"I might fail and embarrass myself.
I'm too afraid."

Judge carefully
whether these thoughts are
accurate, and if they're good
reasons not to express the full
force of who you are.

THINK

Dealing with Irritating Thoughts

The next time you're upset with someone you care about, write down the thoughts you're having about them.

Then, take a closer look at each one. Is it true?

Does it tell the whole story?

How do these thoughts affect your feelings toward your loved one?

Write down any alternative ways of thinking that might better fit reality.

THINK

Negative Core Beliefs

Write down a day's worth of your thoughts that lead to distress.

Look for recurrent themes:
What patterns do you see?

Catastrophic fears?

Expecting to fail?

Believing others take
you for granted?

Specific thoughts often
come from underlying
"core beliefs" about ourselves,
others, and the world.

By identifying your core
beliefs, you can more easily
recognize and respond
to the thoughts that
come from them.

THINK

Question the Rules

Notice when your behavior is driven by subtle rules you tell yourself (e.g., the things you “must” do).

For example, having to do things in a certain order or to a standard nearing perfection.

Often, these rules are just habits you’ve fallen into that may not be serving you well.

If that is the case, choose a different action that works better for you.

THINK

You're Not the Only One

Our faults or limitations often
feel very personal, even if
they're an unavoidable
part of being human.

When you're feeling critical
toward yourself, remind
yourself that you're not alone.

There are probably countless others
who have similar struggles.

See what it's like to take your
imperfections less personally.

THINK

Do They Really Think That?

We often assume that others are thinking badly of us—that we're awkward, dumb, weird, or any other insulting label.

These thoughts generally have more to do with how we see ourselves than with what others think of us—if they're thinking of us at all.

Notice your negative assumptions about what others think of you, and question whether there's any solid evidence to support these thoughts.

THINK

Bedtime Thoughts

As you get ready to go to bed,
notice what's on your mind.

Then, write down 3 things
(big or small) that you
did well today.

Briefly write down what you did
to help those things go well,
taking care to give yourself
appropriate credit.

After you lie down to sleep,
allow the mind to continue
to dwell on what went well.

THINK

Observe Your Thoughts

Find a quiet space and bring to mind a situation that's been mildly troubling you.

Notice the thoughts your mind has about this situation.

What are your questions, judgments, or fears?

Practice watching these thoughts and studying them with curiosity, without being completely absorbed in them.

Be aware that thoughts are products of the mind, not direct indicators of what is true.

THINK

Shifting Your Comparisons

Notice today when you're comparing yourself unfavorably to others' good fortune or success.

These comparisons are often painful and trigger feelings of envy and inadequacy.

Then, expand the frame:
Who is worse off than you?

What do you have or what have you accomplished that others might admire or even envy?

What happens emotionally when you make this mental shift?

THINK

Useful Anxiety

Notice how you tend
to interpret anxiety.

Does even a little bit feel
like an unwelcome problem?

In its milder forms, anxiety is
actually an adaptive response
that prepares us to take action and
motivates us to get things done.

Reinterpret your anxiety, and
use that nervous energy to help
you do well in a new situation.

Focus on doing the best
you can, however you feel.

THINK

Set Your Course

As you start a home or work project, challenge any unhelpful thoughts that pop into your head, like, "This isn't going to go well" or "I don't know what I'm doing."

Instead, fill your mind with realistic thoughts.

Focus on the effort you're going to put in, which is under your control, rather than on the outcome (e.g., "I'll do my best to solve problems as they come up").

THINK

Worries Resolved

Remind yourself today of times when you were fairly certain something would go badly and it actually turned out fine.

For example,

WORRY:

We would run out of gas.

OUTCOME:

We made it to a gas station.

Write down 5 examples like this.

Recognize that today's worries are likely to be on your list the next time you draw this card, and allow your mind to focus on other things.

THINK

Problems as Opportunities

It is nearly inevitable that you'll experience a problem you weren't expecting today.

Prepare yourself to welcome this event, rather than seeing it as something that "shouldn't have happened."

Keep in mind that life is a continual stream of challenges, and that you have what you need to handle them.

THINK

Plan Rewarding Activities

Write down 3 activities you would like to do more often that bring you enjoyment and/or a sense of accomplishment.

Plan a specific time in your calendar to do one of these activities each day for the next 3 days.

Notice any effects these activities have on your emotions.

ACT

Get Organized

Choose an area of your house that you've been needing to declutter and organize, such as a storage closet or a kitchen drawer.

Set aside 25 minutes per day to work on it until it's done, starting today.

If you're feeling unmotivated, remember that motivation tends to follow action.

Go ahead and get started.

ACT

Spread Joy

Think of someone in your life
whom you care about deeply.

What's one thing you could do
for them today that would
make their life better?

It could be something small, like
making them a cup of tea or
doing one of their chores.

Since feelings often follow action,
don't wait until you feel like doing it.

Lead with action and see
what happens.

ACT

One Step at a Time

What's one activity you need to do but have been putting off?

Identify the very first step in completing it; make the step very small.

For example, the first step in painting a room might be finding your brush and roller.

Complete that step today, and then plan to do the next small step tomorrow.

Continue in this way, one manageable step at a time, until the task is completed.

ACT

Enjoyment and Importance

Write down how you spend your time today.

Note how much you enjoyed each activity and how important it was that you did it.

As you review your day, what trends do you notice?

All enjoyment and no importance?

The reverse?

A good amount of each?

Consider how you can build a healthy balance of both kinds of rewarding activities into your daily schedule.

ACT

Working Through Social Anxiety

Notice whether there is anything you've been avoiding doing today because of social anxiety, such as making a phone call, attending a gathering, disagreeing with someone, or speaking up in a group.

Choose one way to move through that anxiety—something that would challenge you but still be manageable.

Write down what you intend to do, and then follow through on your plan.

ACT

Move in a New Way

Choose a different form of physical activity than what you normally do.

If you usually run,
go for a bike ride.

If yoga is your thing,
try hiking.

Open yourself up to the full experience of the activity, and feel what it's like for your body to move in a less familiar way.

ACT

Treat Yourself to Lunch

Make yourself a nicer lunch today
than you would normally do.

Prepare it as though it's for
someone you love.

Take your time and go the extra
mile, including a cloth napkin
and metal silverware.

As you eat it, see how it feels
to enjoy a meal made with care.

ACT

Eliminate Unnecessary Frustration

Look for one source of frustration in your life that you run into repeatedly, like a disorganized and overstuffed drawer.

These daily hassles take a toll on us in ways we might not realize, like making us more easily irritated by other people.

Set aside some time to fix the problem so you can enjoy more peace and ease.

ACT

Stare Down Your Fear

Look for ways you've let fear hold you back—at work, in your relationships, or in your free time.

Face one of your fears today, choosing something that is challenging yet manageable.

Reach out to someone close to you for support if necessary.

Imagine what your life would look like if you pushed through your fear every day.

ACT

Be Encouraging

The next time you're feeling down, think of someone in your life who needs encouragement, and reach out to support them.

It might help you feel better, and even if it doesn't, it will help the person you care about.

And, more importantly, it shows you that you can be of service even when you're feeling less than 100%.

ACT

Take Care of Yourself

What's one nice thing you can plan for yourself today that you'll look forward to and enjoy doing?

Put it in your calendar at a specific time.

It can be something small, like treating yourself to a fancy coffee drink or listening to your favorite music.

If it's hard to think of ideas, then imagine you were planning it for someone you deeply care about.

ACT

Alternate Work and Breaks

Break up your work today into timed blocks, with periods of rest in between.

For example, clean your house in 25-minute intervals with 5-minute breaks in between.

Take longer breaks after 3 or 4 work intervals.

Use a timer or an app (there are several available), and be sure to take your breaks.

Notice any positive effects on your productivity and mood from working this way.

ACT

Send Your Love Just Because

Bring to mind someone
whom you deeply care about.

Write them a card, email,
or text message letting them know
how much they mean to you.

It doesn't have to take a long
time or be the "perfect" message.

Just let them know you're
thinking of them and that you're
glad they're in your life.

ACT

Plan Your Day with Care

Look carefully at your calendar.

Is there any optional stress built into it?

For example, do you plan so many activities that there's no time left to breathe?

Is there time set aside for life's essentials, like sleep and movement?

Aim to make one improvement in tomorrow's schedule that makes you more excited to greet the day.

ACT

Sleep Check-Up

How many of these sleep-related behaviors do you do?

No screens in the bedroom; a bedtime routine; not using alcohol to fall asleep; a consistent sleep schedule; getting natural light in the morning; a cool, quiet, and dark bedroom; getting out of bed if you can't sleep; no caffeine after lunchtime; no naps late in the day; consistent exercise.

If you scored lower than an 8, aim to make one improvement this week.

ACT

Technology Tune-Up

Pay attention today to how often you're glued to a screen when you don't have to be.

Technology has a way of spreading into every moment of our lives if left unchecked, with negative effects on our relationships and peace of mind.

Designate some screen-free zones today to keep technology in its proper place.

ACT

No Regrets

Imagine looking back
on your life near its end.

What would you regret the most?

Some of the most common
regrets include worrying too
much, being controlled by
fear, and not investing
enough in one's relationships.

Take one small step today
toward fully living the life you
want to have lived, without regret.

ACT

Act Now

Think of one thing you've really wanted to do that you've put on hold, like writing that book, finding a better job, or starting to date.

Perhaps you've told yourself that it won't be the right time until you feel better, aren't so busy, are less anxious, and so forth.

If you're able to do it now, then why wait for the "perfect time"?

Choose to take the first step today.

ACT

Do What Matters

Write down your most important values.

For example, perhaps you value serving others or sharing love with family.

Now, take a look at your schedule for the week.

Do you spend a lot of your time on things you deeply care about?

Or do urgent or trivial things crowd out what's important?

Find one way today to align your calendar with your values.

ACT

Be Accountable

Plan a specific time in your calendar today to do an activity you've been putting off.

Now, tell someone you know well that you're going to do it today.

If you live with others, then post your plan somewhere that everyone can see (e.g., the family white board).

Use accountability to raise the odds that you'll follow through on your intention.

ACT

Let Go of Tension

Sit in a quiet place
with your eyes closed.

Take 3 calming breaths,
exhaling for a count of 5.

Squeeze your hands into fists,
then completely let go of
the tension in your hands.

Take 3 more calming breaths.

Now shrug your shoulders up
toward your ears, creating tension,
and then let your shoulders relax.

End with 3 more breaths.

Notice how you feel now.

ACT

Refine Your Goal

Write down one of your goals.

Then, ask yourself whether it's specific enough that you'll easily know when you've accomplished it.

Is it the right size?

Not so big that it's overwhelming,
but big enough that it
motivates you?

Is it truly yours, so you
really care about doing it?

Adjust your goal as necessary
to fit these criteria.

ACT

An Uplifting Relationship

Nothing has a bigger impact on our well-being than our connections to others.

Think of someone you know who brings out the best in you and who obviously values you.

Contact this person today, and arrange a time to get together if they live close by, or to speak by phone if they're far away.

ACT

Make Space to Work

When you're having a hard time getting started on a project, make sure that your work space is free of clutter.

Remove unnecessary distractions that could pull you away from your task, like tempting browser windows or cell phone notifications.

Create the mental and physical conditions in which you work best.

ACT

Say Thank You

Bring to mind one person you know who has made your life better in a meaningful way.

Choose a way to let them know today that you're grateful for them: in person, by phone, in a handwritten note, or by email or text.

Expressing gratitude to another person is one of the best practices for your well-being, especially when you're feeling down.

ACT

Build Someone Up

Pay someone an unexpected compliment today for behavior that often goes unrecognized.

It might be the skill and good cheer of the bagger at the grocery store, the care your partner takes in cleaning the kitchen, or anything else you find.

Notice the person's reaction, and your own experience of seeing and commenting on others' strengths.

ACT

A New Recipe

The foods we eat often affect our emotional well-being.

Make a plan to follow a new recipe that features some of your favorite vegetables and other healthful foods.

Choose something that's the right level for your cooking experience.

If you're a novice, it could be something quite basic.

Look online to find a recipe and watch how-to videos, if needed.

Enjoy the full experience as you immerse yourself in the process, from gathering your ingredients to cooking and savoring your meal.

ACT

Improve Efficiency

Look for ways to reduce perfectionism, like trying to craft the perfect email.

Generally, the first 20% of your time and effort provides most of the benefit, while the remaining 80% leads to little improvement.

Use this principle today to reduce unnecessary work, and invest the remaining time in something that's more important to you.

ACT

Batch Actions

Notice any opportunities to reduce your overall workload by doing bigger batches of repetitive tasks at home or at work.

For example, cut up vegetables at the beginning of the week that you use over the next few days, rather than cutting a small amount of vegetables every day.

Reinvest the time you save into your important relationships.

ACT

Focus Outward

Plan a conversation today in which you'll focus your attention entirely on the other person and what they're saying.

When talking with others, we often focus on how we sound or what we think the other person thinks of us, especially when we're socially anxious.

Notice any shifts in how you experience the discussion when the spotlight of your attention is off of yourself.

ACT

Stand Up Straight

Practice standing and sitting with good posture today:

Keep your head up and aligned over your shoulders and hips; shoulders relaxed downward and not slouching forward;

weight balanced evenly across the left and right sides of the body; and release any unnecessary tension.

Notice how your physical bearing affects other aspects of how you meet the world.

ACT

Open to Joy

Lift the corners of your
mouth into a slight smile.

Now, think of ways to
inject some fun into your day.

It's easy to lose our sense of
playfulness when we're busy
and stressed, and we can move
through entire days in a
constant state of seriousness.

Adopt a lighter touch,
even with your stress and
responsibilities, as you
make room for play.

ACT

A Body That Works

Make a mental list of all the ways your body is working well, even if you're dealing with a chronic health issue.

Notice all the systems that have to function to keep you alive and allow you to experience life, like your brain, lungs, and heart.

More in our lives is often right than we realize.

BE

Wash with Awareness

When you wash your hands today,
be aware of the full experience.

Notice the sound of the faucet,
the wetness and temperature
of the water, the scent and
slipperiness of the soap, the
movements of your hands
against each other, and the
sensations of drying your hands.

Finally, be aware of the feeling
of having just-washed hands.

BE

Listen with Presence

Pay close attention to someone
you talk with today.

Focus intently on what they're
saying, their eyes, their body
language, and their
facial expression.

Notice what happens when
you bring your full presence
to your interactions.

BE

Breath Minute

Set a 1-minute timer.

Take nice even breaths, really slowing down the exhalation, for 1 minute, and count how many breaths you take.

When you find yourself feeling stressed or worried, pause and take that number (a minute's worth) of slow, calming breaths—no need to use a timer.

Notice if the mind starts to settle simply by returning to the breath.

BE

Thank You, Good Night

Place a pen and paper by your bed.

Just before you go to bed tonight, write down 3 things you're grateful for about your day.

Your gratitude list might include the people you love, daily experiences (like the food you eat), something that went well today, or whatever you like.

Allow what you write to fill your mind as you turn off the light and go to sleep.

BE

Breaking the Worry Cycle

Worry is often driven
by the question,
"What if _____ happens?"
where the blank is anything
we might be afraid of.

You can break the cycle
of worry by not arguing
with your "what if."

Instead, tell yourself,
"That might happen, and I
would have to deal with it if it did."

Then, bring your focus to what is
actually happening in that moment.

BE

Unnoticed Sounds

Listen today for sounds that
you're usually not aware of.

For example, your shoes as you
slip them on, an orange as you
peel it, or the wind chimes
in your neighborhood.

The sounds might be quite
subtle and easily missed.

What happens when you pay
attention to parts of your life
that usually go unnoticed?

BE

Arms Up

Sit or stand comfortably,
with your arms at your sides.

Become aware of the pull of
gravity and any other sensations
in your hands and arms.

Continue to pay attention to
these sensations as you slowly
raise your arms in front of you,
and then slowly lower them.

Repeat 4-5 times.

BE

Hands-Free Waiting

The next time you're waiting somewhere, like in line at the grocery store, look around you and take in the scene.

Resist the urge to immediately pull out your phone.

Instead, be fully in the experience of this moment.

Who or what do you see?

What do notice that you wouldn't have otherwise?

BE

Open to Reality

When you find yourself feeling
annoyed or frustrated today,
notice your thoughts.

Are you silently insisting that reality
should be different than it is?

That things should work
better, be easier, go faster,
or be better organized?

Let go of the struggle as you
open to the reality that is.

BE

Notice What You Have

The best parts of our lives
fade into the background
and become invisible, unless
they're taken from us.

Become more aware today of
the ordinary things you're glad
to have, such as the air you
breathe, the clothes you wear,
the home that shelters you, and
the people you love.

Acknowledge the everyday
gifts that fill your life.

BE

Make Friends with Time

We often rush from one thing
to another, feeling like
there's never enough time.

You might even start to see
time as the enemy.

Choose one task today that you'll
allow to take as long as it takes.

Release any sense of
pressure or clock watching.

You don't have to go slowly; just
be present and aware that you've
been given the time you need.

BE

Bathe in Awareness

Open to the full experience
of taking a bath or shower today.

You might notice the sound
of the running water, its
temperature, how it feels on
your body; the scent
of the soap and shampoo; or
the points of contact between
your body and the tub or stall.

Let your attention be very
light—effortless—as it rests in
awareness of each moment.

BE

Gratitude for Your Lungs

Notice today how your lungs enable every activity you do.

Feel how the breath adapts to each demand: slow and steady when you're relaxed, deeper after you climb stairs, rapid during intense exercise, and sharp and shallow when you're anxious.

Leave a note or this card by your bed to remind yourself to notice the gentle rise and fall of your breath when you lie down to sleep.

BE

A Mindful Chore

Pick one task today to do with full awareness, like washing the dishes or sweeping the floor.

Notice the feeling in your hands as you work, the sounds you hear around you, and any other sensory experiences.

When you find that your mind wanders and becomes lost in other thoughts, gently return to the chore, without criticizing your mind for doing what it naturally does.

Simply come back to what you're doing.

BE

Notice the Season

Be on the lookout today for markers of the current season.

Notice how the sky looks;
the feel and smell of the air,
plants, trees, and flowers;
and the angle of the light.

Perhaps the foods you're eating
are typical of the season too.

Use your awareness of the season
to connect with the natural world.

BE

Be Present in Your Body

Sit comfortably in a quiet place.

Bring your awareness to your body, noticing any sensations that are present, starting with your toes and feet.

Slowly move your attention up through your ankles, lower legs, knees, thighs, hips, abdomen, chest, back, shoulders, arms, wrists, hands, and finally your face and head.

Simply observe each area as you connect with your body.

BE

Listen to the Music

Music is often background noise that we barely notice.

Today, listen to one of your favorite songs somewhere you won't be disturbed.

Give it your full attention, taking in the whole song from start to finish.

You might also be aware of how the music affects your body, mind, and spirit.

BE

Breathe with a Problem

With your eyes closed, bring to mind an unresolved problem in your life that triggers a moderate amount of challenging emotions.

Notice how the emotion shows up.

Does it manifest as
physical tension?

Mental strain?

A sinking sensation in your spirit?

Spend a few minutes breathing with whatever you find, without trying to change how you're feeling.

Practice making space for all
of your experience.

BE

I Am Here

Sit or stand comfortably
in a quiet space.

Allow your eyes to close.

As you breathe in, think to yourself,

"I am."

As you exhale, think,

"Here."

Repeat this for a few minutes:

"I am... here. I am... here."

Notice how your mind and spirit
respond to this simple declaration.

Return to this practice during the
day, with your eyes open as needed,
to affirm your place in this world.

BE

Walk with Awareness

Take a walk today in an area that's very familiar to you, and pay attention more deeply than you normally would.

Take in the sights, sounds, and smells. What do you notice for the first time?

Does anything surprise you?

What would it be like to bring this level of awareness to more of your life?

BE

Alternate Nostril Breathing

Sit comfortably in a quiet setting.

Use your right thumb to gently close the right nostril, and inhale slowly.

Pause a second, then close your left nostril with your right pinkie, release your thumb, and exhale gently.

Pause, inhale through the right nostril, and switch the thumb and pinkie again as you exhale.

With practice, you'll quickly get the hang of it.

Continue for 2-3 minutes, noticing any effects on your nervous system.

BE

Seeing the Good

The next time you run into a challenge, see if it may be pointing to something positive.

For example, if you have to go to the emergency room, realize that you have access to high quality medical care around the clock.

If your work is stressful, notice that you have a job to pay your bills.

Allow your difficulties to reveal what is right in your life.

BE

Loving Kindness

Sit comfortably in a quiet place.

Take 3 slow, calming breaths.

Bring to mind someone you
deeply love, and mentally
send them these wishes:

"May you be safe."

"May you be happy."

"May you find ease in your life."

"May you be free from suffering."

Feel a glow of loving kindness
radiating from inside you.

Dwell in that love as you direct
these wishes toward yourself:

"May I be safe."

"May I be happy...."

BE

Breathe and Give Thanks

Sit comfortably in a quiet place.

Bring your awareness to the breath as it moves in and out of the body.

With each breath, bring to mind one thing in your life that you're grateful for, like your house, your car, or your kids. Include everyday gifts like the air you're breathing.

You might repeat this meditation if you ever find yourself lying awake in the middle of the night.

BE

Presence at the Table

Just before you start eating one of your meals today, pause to feel your feet on the ground and your weight pressing into your chair.

Look for a moment at anyone sharing the meal with you.

Carefully notice the food in front of you, taking in its colors, textures, and aroma.

As you pick up your utensil, feel its weight and contours in your hand.

Enjoy this meal.

BE

Feel Your Strength

Sit comfortably in a quiet location.

As you breathe, feel the strength
in your abdomen that draws
air into your lungs.

Become aware of how the
breath powers your fundamental
connection to this life and radiates
through your body, all the way
out to your hands and feet.

Return to an awareness of the
breath empowering your every
action throughout the day.

BE

Sit with an Urge

Notice today when you have an urge to change your emotional state by eating or drinking something, reaching for your phone, or engaging in some other behavior.

Take a moment to be present with the urge.

Feel what's happening in your body and mind that may be driving it, as opposed to acting on it immediately, which may give you more flexibility in how you respond.

BE

Seeing Anew

Pick up a book today as if it's
the first time you've seen one.

Study it carefully, noticing its
texture and contours, its weight,
its construction, and its smell.

Hear the sound it makes as you
open it and turn the pages.

What do you notice that's
never stood out before?

Look for other opportunities
today to see your world
as if for the first time.

BE

Embrace Uncertainty

It's uncomfortable not to know in advance how our lives will go:

"Will I stay healthy?"

"Will I succeed?"

"Will people love me?"

Or on a smaller scale,

"Will I find a parking space?"

"Will I be late?"

Yet trying to figure out how things will go often leads to worry and anxiety.

Treat today as an opportunity to be open to—even embrace—the fundamental uncertainty woven into our existence.

BE

Let Go of Judgments

Our minds are continually judging
whether situations are
“for us” or “against us.”

For example, green lights and
generous people are “good,”
whereas red lights and
irritating people are “bad.”

See if it's possible today to let go of
any automatic judgments, opening
instead to what is in front of you.

Allow yourself to experience
reality just as it is.

BE

Basic Meditation

Sit comfortably in a quiet place
and set a timer for 3 minutes.

Allow your eyes to close.

Bring your attention lightly to
the breath, feeling your belly
rise and fall with each cycle.

When your mind wanders,
as it surely will, just gently
bring it back to the breath,
without self-criticism.

Release any expectations of what
"should" happen as you meditate.

Simply be with the breath.

BE

See a Loved One

The better we know someone,
the easier it is to stop seeing them.

As you sit with someone
you care about today, take
in the person you see.

Notice their eyes, their hair, and
the way they move and talk.

Consider the unlikely circumstances
that brought them into your life.

There's no need to try to feel
anything in particular—just observe.

BE

Waves of Breath

Set a timer for 3 minutes and sit comfortably with your eyes closed.

See yourself seated peacefully
on a sandy beach.

Feel the breath moving in and
out like the ebb and flow of
waves on the shore.

Treat each thought that appears
in your mind like a bird that
walks into view; let the “birds”
do what they like while you
breathe with the waves.

BE
