SMALL ENOUGH THAT A BAD SHIFT CANNOT TAKE IT.

THE 3-3-3 RESET

Vera Lin's shift-worker habit system

Three minutes of movement. Three minutes of breathing. Three food swaps a day. Thirty days, thirty ticks, and a routine that survives a bad shift.

Vera Lin, 35. Night shifts, London. Nine years in.

First edition, 2026. Subscriber workbook.

A letter from Vera

Right. Let me tell you how this started, because I do not want you thinking I am one of those people who gets up at five and runs up a hill.

I have done nine years of nights. I have eaten cereal at ten in the evening and called it dinner. I have paid for a gym I went to eleven times across two years, and I have made a beautiful plan on a Sunday that was dead by Wednesday. My record for a new routine is eleven days. I know exactly how that goes: you are not lazy, the plan was simply built for somebody with a calmer week than yours.

Then my back started complaining, and one of the older nurses on the ward said the thing that changed it for me. She said: stop trying to do the whole thing, do three minutes. If it is still good in a month, do three minutes again.

So that is what I did. Three minutes of movement, most days before I let myself sit down. Three minutes of breathing, boxed in wherever I could put it, in the car park, in the stock room, outside the family bathroom once. And three food swaps a day, which is just the honest version of eating better without rewriting your life.

It worked because it was small enough that I could not fail at it. It is not a transformation story. It is the story of a routine that has actually survived two weeks of nights, a chest infection, a funeral and a heatwave, which is more than any plan of mine has managed before.

This workbook is that routine, written down, with the thirty days laid out so you do not have to hold any of it in your head. You do not need to believe in it. You just need three minutes and a tick in a box.

Take it at whatever speed your week allows. If you do this properly and nothing changes in thirty days, that is useful information as well, and I would rather you came back and told me that than quietly refunded it.

And if you got here from the videos, thank you. It is a strange and lovely thing that so many of you asked me to put this on paper.

Small enough that a bad shift cannot take it.

Why this works

The mechanism is boring, which is why it works.

Habit research keeps landing on the same three findings, and the 3-3-3 is built on them. First, which is the big one: a habit is held together by the cue and the repetition, not by how impressive it is. People who train for an hour three times a week give up when a bad week arrives, because the habit does not survive disruption. Something that takes three minutes can be done on the worst day of the fortnight, so it never breaks, and an unbroken cue is what turns behaviour into routine.

Second, starting is the hard part and the rest is much easier. Getting into the movement, or the breath, or the choice at the shop is where the effort sits. Three minutes gets you over the only wall that matters, and people who clear that wall usually keep going of their own accord. That is a nice side effect, not a requirement. The three minutes is the promise, not a trick to get you to do more.

Third, and this is the nurse in me: micro habits are what gets used under pressure. The breathing pattern in this book is a slowed breath with a longer exhale, which research on relaxation keeps finding helps people come down a gear. I am not going to dress that up as medicine. It helps me get to sleep after a night shift, and it helps thousands of people who have never set foot on a ward.

On food, the honest version: nobody sensible believes one perfect meal fixes anything. Swaps work because they change what is in the house and what you reach for without requiring a decision at nine at night, and decisions are exactly what you have none of after twelve hours.

What this book is not. It is not medical advice and I am not your clinician. It does not treat, cure or fix any condition, and it is not a substitute for the care of an actual doctor, dietitian or therapist. It is a habit system for tired people, and if you have a health condition, are pregnant, or are recovering from anything, run it past your GP first. If you have a difficult relationship with food, this book is not for you, and the free support services at the back are better than anything I can sell you.

> *The rule of the whole book: if you cannot do it on your worst shift, it is not a habit yet. Make it smaller.*

Before you start: your two scores

Fill this in before day one. It takes ninety seconds and it is the most valuable page in the book, because in thirty days it is the only thing that will tell you the truth about whether this worked. Honest numbers, no rounding up in your own favour.

How is your energy, most days?

1 = running on fumes, 10 = genuinely fine

5

How is your sleep, most nights?

1 = staring at the ceiling, 10 = out like a light

5

One line to your future self, written today:

Something you want the you of thirty days from now to read back.

In thirty days you will score these two again, on the last page, and read your own line back. That is the whole measurement. Not a photo, not a number on a scale, not somebody else's before and after.

What to expect

Days one to four: easy, and slightly silly. Three minutes feels like nothing, because it is nothing. The risk here is enthusiasm, so if you want to do ten minutes, do not. Bank the three and stop, so the habit stays cheap.

Days five to fourteen: this is the wobble, and it is planned for. Something will break your week, usually a bad shift, and you will feel the pull to either double up tomorrow or quietly quit. Neither. Do the minimum version, tick the box, move on. The people who finish this book are not more disciplined than you. They just had a plan for the wobble.

Days fifteen to twenty two: it starts being yours. The movement happens before you have negotiated with yourself. You will notice you reach for the breath in an irritating moment without deciding to.

Days twenty three to thirty: you are not building any more, you are choosing. This is where most habit books stop and where this one does the important work, because the last week is spent deciding which five things you are keeping forever, and writing them down.

What probably will not happen: a dramatic physical transformation in a month. What probably will: a routine that is still standing in a month, which is rarer than it sounds and worth more than a transformation you abandon in the spring.

The failure page, read this before you need it

p. 6

You will miss a day. This page exists so that missing a day is boring instead of fatal.

The rule of the book: no restarts, no catching up, no doubling. If you miss Tuesday, you are not behind, you are a person who missed Tuesday. You do the next one and you keep the streak counting the way this book counts it, which is by ticks across the thirty days, not by uninterrupted runs.

There is a reason for that. Most people who fail at a routine do not fail on the missed day. They fail on the day after, when they try to make up for it, fail at that, and then decide the whole project is a lie about who they are. Skipping the catch-up step skips the entire collapse.

There is also a minimum version, and it counts. One minute of movement, one slow minute of breathing, one swap. On a truly awful day that is the whole book, and you still get the tick, because a tick you can trust is worth more than a workout you will not repeat.

> *The tick sheet is a record, not a courtroom.*

Make it fit your life

The default shape of this book assumes a fairly normal week. Here is how it bends without breaking.

If you work nights

Run your three minutes at the same point of your day every time, which for most night workers means before sleep rather than after waking. Do not try to do the movement after a twelve hour shift, do it before you get in the car to go home. The breathing belongs immediately before the lights go out, because that is the moment it is actually doing a job.

If you have children

The three minutes happen where they can see you and it is fine, and the swap happens at the shop rather than in a heroic kitchen session. Children remember a parent who does small things regularly far more than one who disappears for an hour.

If you have a body with limits

Movement means whatever yours does comfortably. Chair based, seated, slow, swimming, walking to the end of the road, all of it counts. If a movement causes pain, stop, and speak to a physiotherapist or your GP rather than pushing through it.

If you share your food with other people

Swaps have to be things nobody has to cook separately. Every swap in the bank at the back was chosen because it works inside an ordinary household, including one where somebody else does the cooking. Choose yours with the person who shops and cooks, not against them.

If this is bigger than a habit problem

This book is for tiredness and routine, and there is a line past which a workbook is the wrong tool. If you are not sleeping for weeks at a time, if you are eating in a way that frightens you, if your mood has gone flat and stayed there, that is a conversation with a professional, and having it is the strong move. In the UK: your GP first, 111 for urgent advice, 116 123 for the Samaritans at any hour, and the Beat helpline if food is the problem. Free, and better than anything in here.

How to use this workbook

Thirty days, one page each, one named rule each. The rules are the part that sticks, so read the name and then do the small thing under it.

- On the screen: tick the box on each day and your progress bar fills. Your answers save themselves in this browser, so you can close it and come back. Nothing is sent anywhere, to anyone. If you clear your browser data you clear your ticks, so print anything you care about.
- The timer: on any day with a three minute practice there is a timer button next to it. Press it, do the thing, and stop when it stops. Do not extend it.
- On paper: this file prints properly. The days each start on a fresh page, the fridge cards and the tick sheet at the back come out as cards you can cut out, and the print button on the cover prints everything if you want the whole book in front of you.
- On a phone or tablet: the week tabs along the top jump between weeks, and the day list is thumb sized. Add it to your home screen and it behaves like an app.
- If you are doing it with a friend or a colleague: swap the odd screenshot of a ticked day. It sounds ridiculous and it roughly doubles the chance of finishing, which is why so many of my colleagues are doing it.

One warning. Do not read the whole book in one sitting. It is designed to be lived through, and the days you read early are the days you will skip later.

CONTENTS

What is inside

p. 9

A letter from Vera p. 2

Why this works p. 3

Before you start: your two scores p. 4

What to expect p. 5

The failure page p. 6

Make it fit your life p. 7

How to use this workbook p. 8

Week one: start stupidly small p. 10

Week two: make it fit a working week p. 18

Week three: when it gets hard p. 27

Week four: make it permanent p. 35

The working pages p. 45

The whole method, on one page p. 46

The swap bank p. 47

Bonus: the quickstart seven p. 50

Bonus: the three minute movement bank p. 51

Bonus: the breath bank p. 52

Bonus: the shift week planner p. 53

Bonus: the handover page p. 54

Bonus: the fridge cards p. 55

The five things you are keeping p. 57

The honest small print p. 58

Every page number here is generated from the printed file itself, so the numbers match the pages you are holding.

Week one: Start stupidly small

Seven days of doing almost nothing, on purpose. The aim of week one is not results, it is proving to yourself that the three minutes can happen on an ordinary day with an ordinary amount of chaos in it.

The Three Minute Rule

Three minutes of movement today, before you let yourself sit down for the evening. Set the timer. When it stops, you stop, even if you are enjoying it. Walking up and down the stairs counts. So does dancing in the kitchen with the radio on, and so does stretching on the floor while the kettle boils.

Why it works: The habit gets built by the repetition, not by how impressive the session is.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE - [ ] Movement - [ ] Breath - [ ] Swaps

What did the three minutes actually look like today?

And one thing that got in the way:

The Fridge Card Rule

Choose the three food swaps you will actually eat this week, and write them on the card at the back of this book. Print it, or copy it onto the back of an envelope, and put it on the fridge where you will see it while you are deciding what to have.

Why it works: One decision made calmly at the fridge beats fifty decisions made at nine at night.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE - [ ] Movement - [ ] Breath - [ ] Swaps

Which three swaps did you choose, and who else in the house will notice them?

And one thing that got in the way:

The Doorway Breath

Pick one doorway you go through every single day. The kitchen door. The ward doors. The car door. Every time you go through it today, stand still for the breath: in through your nose for a count of four, out through your mouth for a count of six. Do three minutes of that in total, and use the timer for the last one.

Why it works: The long exhale is the half of the breath that brings you down a gear.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE - [ ] Movement - [ ] Breath - [ ] Swaps

Where did you put the breath, and what did counting the four feel like?

And one thing that got in the way:

The One Swap Rule

Change one thing in one meal today. Not your diet, not the week, not the shopping. One thing: the fizzy drink for a glass of water, the second helping for a smaller plate, the biscuit for the fruit you already bought and forgot about.

Why it works: Swaps survive real life. Whole diets do not survive a bad shift.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE - [ ] Movement - [ ] Breath - [ ] Swaps

Which swap did you make, and did you notice anything at all?

And one thing that got in the way:

The Bad Shift Clause

Write your minimum version down now, before you need it: one minute of movement, one slow minute of breathing, one swap. That is the whole book on a day when everything else has gone wrong, and it counts exactly the same.

Why it works: A plan with a floor cannot collapse, it can only shrink.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE - [ ] Movement - [ ] Breath - [ ] Swaps

What is your minimum version, written in your own words?

And one thing that got in the way:

The Timer Rule

Everything by timer today. Three minutes of movement, three minutes of breathing, and you are not allowed to guess at either. Most people's three minutes is closer to eight when they are tired and closer to ninety seconds when they are bored.

Why it works: Three minutes guessed is a negotiation. Three minutes timed is just three minutes.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE

- [ ] Movement
- [ ] Breath
- [ ] Swaps

Which of the three minutes felt longer than it was?

And one thing that got in the way:

Week one review

Look back at the ticks. Not judgement, just counting: what stuck, what you dodged, what surprised you. Then close the book and do nothing else, which is the point of this page. No catching up, no restarting, no plan to be better.

Why it works: Reviewing what happened beats promising what will happen.

- [ ] Done today

What evidence do you already have that this is doable?

And one thing that got in the way:

PART 2 OF 4

Week two: Make it fit a working week

p. 18

Now it has to survive contact with your actual rota. This is the week most routines die, which is why the days get specific about nights, car parks, handovers and breakfasts.

DAY 8 · MAKE IT FIT A WORKING WEEK

The Night Shift Inversion

p. 19

If you are on nights this week, invert the order. The movement happens before you leave the building, or in the twenty minutes after you get in and before you go to sleep. The breathing happens with the lights already off, in bed, which is the only place it is doing real work for you.

Why it works: Putting the habit where your energy already is beats waiting for energy you will not get.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE

- [ ] Movement
- [ ] Breath
- [ ] Swaps

What time of day did the three minutes actually happen?

And one thing that got in the way:

The Car Park Rule

Three minutes of movement in the car park before you walk in. Before the shift, before the supermarket, before the school run. Door to door, boots on, up and down the far end of the row where nobody parks. Nobody is watching and the timer does not care about the weather.

Why it works: A three minute habit needs a place that does not depend on going home first.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE - [ ] Movement - [ ] Breath - [ ] Swaps

Where did you do it, and how did you feel walking in afterwards?

And one thing that got in the way:

The One Honest Meal

Eat one meal today sitting down, off a plate, with no phone in your hand and nobody standing over you. If a real meal is impossible, then one honest plate of whatever you have, still sitting down. Three minutes of eating properly, if that is what today gives you.

Why it works: Eating while distracted is how a whole day of food happens without one memory of it.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE - [ ] Movement - [ ] Breath - [ ] Swaps

Which meal did you sit down for, and what was it?

And one thing that got in the way:

The Swap Bank

Go to the swap bank at the back of this book and pick three you would genuinely eat this week. Write them on your fridge card, replacing one you are bored with. Rotate them when you start ignoring the card, because a card nobody reads is just fridge decoration.

Why it works: Variety is what stops a swap turning into a rule you start resenting.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE

- [ ] Movement
- [ ] Breath
- [ ] Swaps

Which swaps made the cut this week, and which one did you retire?

And one thing that got in the way:

The No-Decision Breakfast

p. 23

Decide breakfast once, today, and eat the same thing every morning this week. It does not have to be impressive. It has to be something you will make at half five without thinking, because that is the only kind of breakfast that survives your rota.

Why it works: Every decision you remove before seven in the morning is energy you still have at nine p.m.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE
- [ ] Movement
- [ ] Breath
- [ ] Swaps

What did you settle on, and how long did it take to make on day two?

And one thing that got in the way:

The Handover Breath

Three minutes of breathing before handover, if you are on shift. If you are not, put it before the last hour of your working day, or before the first thing you do at home, whichever your week can hold. Same breath: in for four, out for six, shoulders down.

Why it works: The transition between work and home is where most people hold the whole day in their neck.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE - [ ] Movement - [ ] Breath - [ ] Swaps

How did you feel going into the thing that came after?

And one thing that got in the way:

REVIEW · MAKE IT FIT A WORKING WEEK

Week two review, the dip

p. 25

This was the wobble week, and if it wobbled, that is not a failure, it is the timetable working. Count the ticks honestly, note which day you nearly lost it, and read the letter on the next page before you carry on.

Why it works: A dip that was predicted does not cause quitting. An unpredicted one does.

- [ ] Done today

What almost knocked the routine over this week?

And one thing that got in the way:

A letter for the middle

Right. If you are reading this, you are somewhere around day fourteen, which is the day most people quietly stop, and I want you to know that the stopping feeling is normal and it is not information about you.

Here is what usually happens. Week one is easy because it is new and the ticks stack up. Week two arrives with an ordinary, unavoidable, slightly grim week in it, the ticks get patchy, and the story starts: I am not the sort of person who keeps this up. I have thought that exact sentence on a Tuesday in February with the rain coming in sideways, and I was wrong then, and you are wrong now.

The only thing that matters this week is not breaking the chain of small things. Not doing it better. Not catching up. Just not letting a missed day turn into a missed month, because that is the entire game and it is the only part of this book I would argue about.

One more thing. If you have got this far, then the three minutes have already happened more often than not, and for a person doing night shifts or long days that is genuinely rare. The evidence is the ticks, not the feeling. Look at the ticks.

The tick sheet is a record, not a courtroom.

What will you do tomorrow, in one sentence?

Week three: When it gets hard

The week you learn the recovery moves. Every day in this section is a way back in after a day that went badly, which is the only skill that really matters here.

The Two Percent Rule

Scale the movement to your actual tank today. Two percent of an energetic day is three minutes of walking. Two percent of a terrible one is sitting on the floor stretching your neck for three minutes. Both are the same habit, on the same day, in the same book.

Why it works: The habit is the doing of it, not the intensity of it.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE - [ ] Movement - [ ] Breath - [ ] Swaps

What did two percent look like for you today?

And one thing that got in the way:

The Rubbish Day Rule

Today is a rubbish day, or it will be soon enough. On a rubbish day the tick comes from the minimum version: one minute of movement, one slow minute of breathing, one swap. Tick it and get into bed. There is no version of this book where you earn the tick by suffering first.

Why it works: A tick you can trust on the worst day is worth more than a session you will not repeat.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE - [ ] Movement - [ ] Breath - [ ] Swaps

What did your rubbish day actually look like?

And one thing that got in the way:

The Kettle Rule

Move while the kettle boils. Not after. While. Three minutes of movement in the kitchen in front of the hob, and the water will still not be ready when you have finished, which is the point: you are borrowing time you were going to waste anyway.

Why it works: Attaching a new habit to an existing one is the cheapest build there is.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE
- [ ] Movement
- [ ] Breath
- [ ] Swaps

Which existing thing have you attached your three minutes to?

And one thing that got in the way:

The Swap That Feels Illegal

Choose a swap today that feels like a treat rather than a punishment. The good yoghurt. The proper bread. The chocolate you actually like, on a plate, sitting down. Not the biscuit you eat standing up over the sink while telling yourself off.

Why it works: Swaps you enjoy get kept. Swaps you tolerate get abandoned in the second week.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE - [ ] Movement - [ ] Breath - [ ] Swaps

What did you have, and did anything bad happen afterwards?

And one thing that got in the way:

The Borrowed Five

Take five minutes today that you would have spent on somebody else, and spend them on the body that has been carrying your week. Then write down what you did with them, because most people cannot remember, which tells you how rarely it happens.

Why it works: You already give this time away daily. This is about not giving all of it away.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE

- [ ] Movement
- [ ] Breath
- [ ] Swaps

What did you do with your five minutes?

And one thing that got in the way:

The Guest Rule

Someone will be in your house, or watching, or staying this week. Do the minimum version in front of them and explain nothing. Three minutes of movement in the corner of a room full of relatives is a normal thing to do. It only feels strange the first time, and it is the fastest way to find out that nobody is keeping score but you.

Why it works: A habit that needs privacy will not survive a full house.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE - [ ] Movement - [ ] Breath - [ ] Swaps

Who was around, and how did it feel to just do it anyway?

And one thing that got in the way:

Week three review

Look at the whole sheet. You now have a set of recovery moves: the minimum version, the never twice rule, the two percent rule. Pick the one that saved you this week and write it on the card at the back, because the recovery move is what you will need most.

Why it works: Only the recovery moves matter after the first month.

- [ ] Done today

Which day did you actually need most?

And one thing that got in the way:

Week four: Make it permanent

You are not building any more, you are choosing. Four weeks of ticks are worth nothing if they stop on day thirty, so this week decides what stays.

The Back-to-Back Rule

If you have two hard days in a row, the second one is the minimum version, decided in advance. Not negotiated at nine p.m. when you are horizontal. Decided now, on this page, in daylight, with the tick still counting.

Why it works: Making the decision while you are still able to is the whole skill.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE - [ ] Movement - [ ] Breath - [ ] Swaps

Which two days this week will the minimum cover?

And one thing that got in the way:

The Sunday Ten

Ten minutes, once a week, planning the smallest possible week: three swaps restocked, three movement slots chosen, one kind thing booked for yourself. Use the planner at the back. That is the entire plan. If it takes longer than ten minutes you have made it too complicated.

Why it works: A week with slots already chosen needs no willpower on the day.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE

- [ ] Movement
- [ ] Breath
- [ ] Swaps

What are your three movement slots, and what is the kind thing?

And one thing that got in the way:

The Shop Once Rule

One shop this week, and its only job is to restock the three swaps. Not a new diet, not a trolley full of good intentions that wilt at the weekend. Three items, in the trolley, every week, until it is boring.

Why it works: Food you have to make an effort to fetch will not be the food you eat at nine at night.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE - [ ] Movement - [ ] Breath - [ ] Swaps

Did the swaps make it into the house this week?

And one thing that got in the way:

The Phone Down Minute

Three minutes of breathing with the phone in another room. Not face down beside you, not on silent in your pocket. Another room. If you are on nights, this is the one to do before sleep, with the lights off.

Why it works: The breath competes with a screen, and the screen wins when it is within reach.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE - [ ] Movement - [ ] Breath - [ ] Swaps

What was different about the three minutes without it?

And one thing that got in the way:

The Never Twice Rule

Miss a day and nothing happens. Miss two in a row and the routine is in trouble, because that is how habits actually die: quietly, on the second day, while people are telling themselves they will start again on Monday.

Why it works: One missed day is a day. Two is a new pattern.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE
- [ ] Movement
- [ ] Breath
- [ ] Swaps

What is your plan for the day after a miss?

And one thing that got in the way:

The Off-Duty Kindness

Do one thing today that is purely kind to your body and has no performance in it. A bath with the door locked. Walking to the end of the road in the dark. Stretching on the floor while the house is asleep. An early night with the phone downstairs.

Why it works: Rest is part of the routine, not a reward you earn after it.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE - [ ] Movement - [ ] Breath - [ ] Swaps

What did you do, and did you let yourself enjoy it?

And one thing that got in the way:

DAY 28 · MAKE IT PERMANENT

The Handover to Future You

p. 42

Write a page to yourself, the way you would hand over at work: what is working, what is not, what you need to be told on a bad day, and what you have learned about your own week. Use the page at the back. Be honest, because you will be the one reading it.

Why it works: The version of you who is tired will not remember today's clarity.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE - [ ] Movement - [ ] Breath - [ ] Swaps

What is the one instruction you most need to hear in three weeks?

And one thing that got in the way:

The Full Set

All three today, deliberately: movement, breath, swaps, done on purpose rather than fitted around the edges of the day. Then write down how ordinary it felt, because that is the real result of the last four weeks. Not a transformation. A thing you now do.

Why it works: Doing it on purpose, once, shows you it was never the plan that was missing.

- [ ] Done today

TODAY'S THREE
- [ ] Movement
- [ ] Breath
- [ ] Swaps

How ordinary did the full set feel today?

And one thing that got in the way:

The Keep Five

Go back to the front of this book and score your two numbers again. Then read the line you wrote to yourself on day zero, and look at the whole sheet of ticks. Finally, choose the five things from the last thirty days that you are keeping forever, and write them on the card at the back, because that card is what this book was for.

Why it works: Thirty days is a build. Five things kept is a life.

- [ ] Done today

Which five are you keeping?

And one thing that got in the way:

That is it. That is the whole book, and you have done it while working the kind of weeks that would flatten most people's plans by the second Tuesday.

You will not need me for the next part. The card at the back, the two numbers, and the recovery moves are all the equipment it takes, and you already own them.

If it helped, tell one tired person about the three minutes. That is the whole marketing department, and it works better than anything I could pay for.

The working pages

Everything you actually need once the thirty days are done: the method on one page, the swaps you will keep eating, the cards for the fridge, and the five things you are keeping.

The whole method, on one page

p. 46

The daily three

Three minutes of movement. Three minutes of breathing, in for four and out for six. Three food swaps. Done in any order, at any hour, in any combination your day allows.

The minimum version

One minute of movement, one slow minute of breathing, one swap. This is the whole book on a bad day and it earns the same tick.

The two recovery rules

Never twice: one missed day is a day, two is a new pattern. Two percent: scale the movement to the tank you actually have, not the one you wish you had.

The tick

A tick is a record, not a verdict. Thirty days of ticks beats thirty days of intentions, and the sheet at the back is the only progress bar that matters.

The five

On day thirty you keep five things forever and write them on the card. The book is scaffolding. The card is the building.

The swap bank

Tick any swap to add it to your card, then print the card at the back. Pick three. Three is the number that survives a working week, and a card with nine things on it is a wish list.

Breakfast, where the day is won or lost

INSTEAD OF	HAVE THIS	MY THREE
The cereal you could eat with your eyes shut	Porridge with the same milk. Same bowl, more staying power.	☐
White toast	The seeded loaf you actually like the taste of. No heroics.	☐
The fruit yoghurt	Plain yoghurt with honey stirred in. Same sweetness, less of everything else.	☐
Skipping it entirely	Something on a tray, even if the tray is the lid of a tub. Tired people who skip breakfast eat the day twice.	☐
The pastry at the station	A banana in the bag and the same coffee. One change, not two.	☐
A glass of juice	A whole orange, eaten standing at the counter. Slower, and it fills you up more.	☐

On shift, when there is no proper break

INSTEAD OF	HAVE THIS	MY THREE
The vending machine at three in the morning	The sandwich you made before you left, which took ninety seconds and cost a third of the price.	☐
The garage meal deal	Last night's dinner in a tub. This is the single biggest swap in the bank.	☐

INSTEAD OF	HAVE THIS	MY THREE
The third coffee of the shift	A glass of water first, then the coffee if you still want it. You usually still want it.	☐
The staff room cake	Half the slice, eaten sitting down, with no commentary about being naughty.	☐
Eating standing at the desk	Eating sitting down, for three minutes, with the notes out of your hands.	☐
The chocolate bar at four a.m.	The banana first, then the chocolate. Both is allowed. Just not only the chocolate.	☐

Dinner, the honest version

INSTEAD OF	HAVE THIS	MY THREE
The takeaway	The same thing made at home in roughly the time delivery takes, on the nights you get in before eight.	☐
The chips	The same plate, half the chips, something green added, because the plate looks fuller and you eat with your eyes.	☐
The ready meal	The batch thing you froze on a day when you had ten spare minutes. This swap is won or lost on your day off.	☐
The second helping	Waiting ten minutes before deciding. Decide after. You will decide differently about half of them.	☐
The late-night toast	Yoghurt and honey, which is the same job with less of a sugar spike before bed.	☐
The plate on your lap	The table, sitting down, no screen. The food does not change and the meal does.	☐

Drinks and the little things

INSTEAD OF	HAVE THIS	MY THREE
The fizzy drink	Sparkling water with the same slice of lemon in the same glass.	☐
The weeknight wine	The wine on the nights you choose in advance. Deciding the nights is the swap, not cutting it out.	☐
Two sugars	One sugar, and then reassess in a fortnight rather than committing to a lifetime.	☐
The three p.m. biscuit	The three p.m. walk to the far end of the corridor and back. If you still want the biscuit, have the biscuit.	☐
The dessert	The smaller plate of the same dessert, on a plate, sitting down. This one is allowed to feel like cheating.	☐
The energy drink	Coffee you make yourself, in the flask you already own, because the cost of that habit is a holiday.	☐

The quickstart seven

p. 50

If thirty days is not going to happen, these are the seven that carry the whole system on their own. Do them in order, three minutes at a time, and you have essentially done the book.

Day 1	**The Three Minute Rule** Three minutes of movement before you sit down.
Day 2	**The Fridge Card Rule** Three swaps, written down, on the fridge.
Day 3	**The Doorway Breath** In for four, out for six, at one doorway you always cross.
Day 4	**The One Swap Rule** One change in one meal. Nothing else.
Day 5	**The Bad Shift Clause** Write the minimum version down now, before you need it.
Day 16	**The Rubbish Day Rule** Bad day equals minimum version, ticked, no guilt.
Day 26	**The Never Twice Rule** Miss one day and nothing happens. Miss two and it is over.

The three minute movement bank

Twelve ways to spend the three minutes, none of which need equipment, a gym, or daylight. Cross out the ones you hate and keep the rest on the fridge card.

1. Up and down your stairs three times, using the handrail like a sensible adult.
2. One song in the kitchen with the radio loud enough to be embarrassing.
3. The car park walk: to the far end of the row and back, twice.
4. Wall press-ups against the corridor wall while nobody is looking.
5. Neck rolls and shoulder rolls, sitting exactly where you are.
6. Standing leg raises while the kettle boils, one leg then the other.
7. Walking on the spot through one ad break.
8. Squats onto the bottom step, holding the rail, at your own pace.
9. Marching on the landing in the dark before you go up to bed.
10. Stretching on the floor while the bath runs.
11. To the end of the road and back, in any weather. This is the best one and the one people skip most.
12. Three minutes of putting one room straight, briskly, because tidying is movement with a bad reputation.

The breath bank

One breath, three places to use it. In through the nose for four, out through the mouth for six. If you feel light headed at any point, stop counting and breathe normally, nobody has ever been sponsored for finishing the count.

The Ward Breath

In through your nose for four, out through your mouth for six. Use it before handover, or before you walk into anything you are dreading. The long exhale is doing the work.

The Car Park Breath

Same count, sitting in the car with the engine off before you go in. Hands off the wheel, shoulders down, six breaths. If you feel light headed, stop counting and breathe normally.

The Lights Out Breath

In bed, lights off, phone in another room. In for four, out for six, until the three minutes are up. This is the one that helps most on a night shift, and it is the one I still use today.

The shift week planner

Ten minutes, once a week, in pen. Write the shift first, then put the movement and the breath where they can actually happen, then name the three swaps you are restocking.

DAY	SHIFT	MOVEMENT SLOT	BREATH SLOT
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

Swaps I am restocking this week:

_____

The handover page

Fill this in on day twenty eight and again whenever the wheels come off. You are writing to the version of you who will read it at eleven at night and believe none of it.

What is working, plainly, in one or two lines.

What keeps going wrong, and at what time of day.

The one instruction you need on a bad day, in your own words.

What your week can honestly hold when it is at its worst.

One kind thing you want to be reminded to do.

The fridge cards

Print this page, cut along the borders, and put them where the decisions actually happen: the fridge, the car, the locker, the inside of the bedroom door. There is a smaller cut-out sheet in the printables file that came with this workbook if you would rather not print the whole book.

The 3-3-3 card

Movement: three minutes
Breath: three minutes
Swaps: three a day

Minimum version: one minute, one minute, one swap.

Small enough that a bad shift cannot take it.

One honest line

Read this on a bad Tuesday.

The minimum version

1 minute of movement.
1 slow minute of breathing.
1 swap.

This is the whole book on a bad day, and it counts.

The two rules that save it

Never twice. Missing one day is a day. Missing two is how a habit dies.

Two percent. Scale the movement to the tank you actually have today.

The 30 day sheet

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30

One box a day. A record, not a courtroom.

The five things I am keeping

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

From the last thirty days. These are the building. The book was scaffolding.

The five things you are keeping

Write the five things from these thirty days that you are keeping forever. Not five ambitions. Five things you have already proved you can do on an ordinary, awkward week.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Score your two numbers again — 1 to 10

Energy 5

Sleep 5

Then read the line you wrote to yourself on day zero. That is evidence, not enthusiasm.

The honest small print

About Vera

Vera Lin is a character. She is played by an AI, written and run by a real person, which is something we would rather say plainly than have you find out and feel foolish. The voice is invented. The routine is not: it is an ordinary habit system that real people, including a good many nurses, actually use. Everything in this book works whether or not you believe in the person telling you about it.

What this book is not

It is not medical advice, and Vera is not your clinician. Nothing here diagnoses, treats or cures anything. It is not a diet, it is not therapy, and it is not a substitute for the care of a qualified professional. If you are pregnant, managing a health condition, or recovering from illness or surgery, talk to your GP before you start.

If this is bigger than a habit problem

Free help that is better than anything in this book: your GP, and NHS 111 for urgent advice. Samaritans on 116 123, any hour, for anything you need to say out loud. Beat, the eating disorder charity, runs free helplines with their numbers on their website, and Mind has a helpline too. Contacting any of them is the strong move, not the failure.

Refunds

If it is not for you, ask and it is refunded, no interrogation. Vera would rather you spent the money on something that helped than kept this out of politeness.

One last thing

You bought a habit system from a nurse who does not exist and it made you do three minutes of movement on a bad Tuesday. That is a strange sentence, and it is also exactly how it is supposed to work.

Small enough that a bad shift cannot take it.