

GENTLE JANUARY

*breathe eat
drink sleep*

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Start the year with a gentle reboot

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DECLUTTERING

Small goals for January

GENTLE JANUARY

decluttering without stress

1

Get a box that is not too big, not too small and put it somewhere you will notice it.

2

Decide where it will go when it is full of clutter and how it will get there

3

Add one thing to it every day

keep what you love

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DECLUTTERING BINGO

Get rid of one thing a day

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decluttering bingo

shoes	cosmetics	bedding	hats and scarves	coats
books	ornaments	pots and pans	paperwork	craft stuff
herbs and spices	mugs	emails	water bottles	candles
duplicates	junk mail	old tech	CD's or DVD's	old undies
plastic containers	towels	magazines	pictures	maps

just declutter one thing!

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GENTLE JANUARY

Forget resolutions

January is often a time for resolutions and clean slates. It can be really tempting to start a strict diet or pull out all your clothes to declutter them. Gentle January is a different approach that is more likely to make you feel better. Resolutions are hard. It takes a lot of motivation and discipline to stick to the slightest pledge you make to yourself and the failure rate of goal based resolutions is high.

A study by the University of Scranton tracked 200 resolvers over 2 years. Over ¾ of the respondents kept to their resolutions for a week but only 19% of them for 2 years. Stress was one of the key reasons people gave up or slipped on their resolutions.¹

Feeling like a failure

In 2019 the most common resolutions according to YouGov were exercising more (50%), saving money (49%), eating more healthily (43%), and losing weight (37%).

Everyone starts off with the best intentions but I'm sure we have all experienced the 'sod it' moment when we slip up. It could be a single ginger biscuit eaten on a strict no carb diet that leads to a big pasta dinner because you feel you have already ruined your diet. On a good day you might be able to return to the diet the next day but most humans are more black and white about our slip ups. We can feel that one tiny error can ruin the whole thing.

¹ www.researchgate.net/publication/223679624_The_resolution_solution_Longitudinal_examination_of_New_Year's_change_attempts

Failing resolutions can make you feel terrible, which can lead to more ginger nuts to make you feel better, which works in the moment but in the long run makes you feel more terrible. If we apply a bit of cognitive behavioural therapy to this problem we need to look at the place in the timeline where we can break the cycle.

Not starting a resolution in the first place can be more a lot more beneficial than trying and failing.

No resolutions

If you can take the pressure to be totally perfect away you stand a better chance of making changes long term. Here are a few ideas.

Shorten the timescale

The Scranton study told us that 76% of people can stick to a resolution for a week. If you really feel like you need to make a big change, try it for 7 days, or 5 and have the weekend off. If that works, do it again the week after.

Lessen the change

"No more sugar" is an honourable but difficult challenge to stick to. Try "Only one ginger nut a day" or "Chocolate at the weekend only" instead. Achieving tiny little goals will give you a tiny little endorphin rush and make you feel like you are winning, which you are.

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RESOLUTION BUSTER

Make it manageable

Start at the bottom of the mountain

If you were considering a mountain climb you would generally start at the bottom. Bigger mountains have base camps along the way. To get to the base camps you put one foot after the other, breaking the climb into many small steps.

This worksheet is to help you find actions you can take daily that help you get to larger goals. For example my goal might be to reduce clutter, my base camp might be to sort out my clothes and my tiny steps would be to declutter one thing every day.

Write down a big goal

Define a base camp

List some tiny steps

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DEFINE TINY ACTIONS

Break down those goals

You can use this page to break down some of your big goals into things that are achievable. Remember you don't need to do them all, this exercise will help you see an overview so you can pick and choose what will work for you. Print it out, or use the layout idea in a notebook.

Big goal

Big goal

Base camp

Base camp

Tiny steps to get there

Tiny steps to get there

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LISTING TINY ACTIONS

Small daily goals

Use this space to write down all the tiny actions that will help you reach your goals.

Do you see any similarities or patterns?

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MAKING NEW HABITS

Stacking and pinning

In his book *Atomic Habits*, James Clear wrote about habit stacking. Instead of relying on willpower or determination, the idea is to attach a new habit to an old one. This forms new neural networks that help us keep to our new habits, it actually becomes more difficult to ignore them than do them.

James has a formula for stacking habits. It looks like this:

After I [Old habit] I will [New habit].

After I [brush my teeth] I will [do ten sit ups].

What are you doing?

This exercise is to find the spaces where we might be able to add a new good habit.

For example, after I wake up I feed the cats, put the kettle onto boil then I go to the loo and brush my teeth. I make a cup of tea and turn the laptop on. I do this every single day. Every evening I draw the curtains and before bed I wash the dishes (most days) and brush my teeth.

There is space in my routine to add new things in. I wait for the kettle to boil and I wait for the laptop to warm up. If I wanted to get a bit fitter I could do a couple of squats or star jumps in that time.

If I wanted to make decluttering a new habit I could open the drawer nearest the kettle and get rid of a few bits of junk.

It might help you to write down what routine you have now and what habits, good or bad emerge from that routine. Just paying

attention to them will help you see patterns emerge and spaces where you can start to build on your existing habits. You might not have a set daily routine and that is fine, there will be things that you do everyday regardless and that is what you need to look out for.

Keep it small

If you decide to add [running a marathon] to an existing habit of [brushing your teeth] you are setting yourself up to fail.

Keep the new habit small, tiny even.

Remember you can build onto it and you are more likely to succeed if you feel like you are improving in some way.

Make it conditional

Another way to build up good habits is to make them conditional on something you really want to do.

I don't like going out for walks in the rain, but I do like speaking to my friends on the phone. I've made it conditional that I only phone friends for long chats when I'm out on a walk, so I have to go out for a walk if I want to speak to them.

What habit fits

When I draw the curtains I'm already standing up, so that might be a good time to get in a bit of a stretch. Once you notice your daily pattern you will be able to design new habits that fit in with it.

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GENTLE JANUARY

finding time

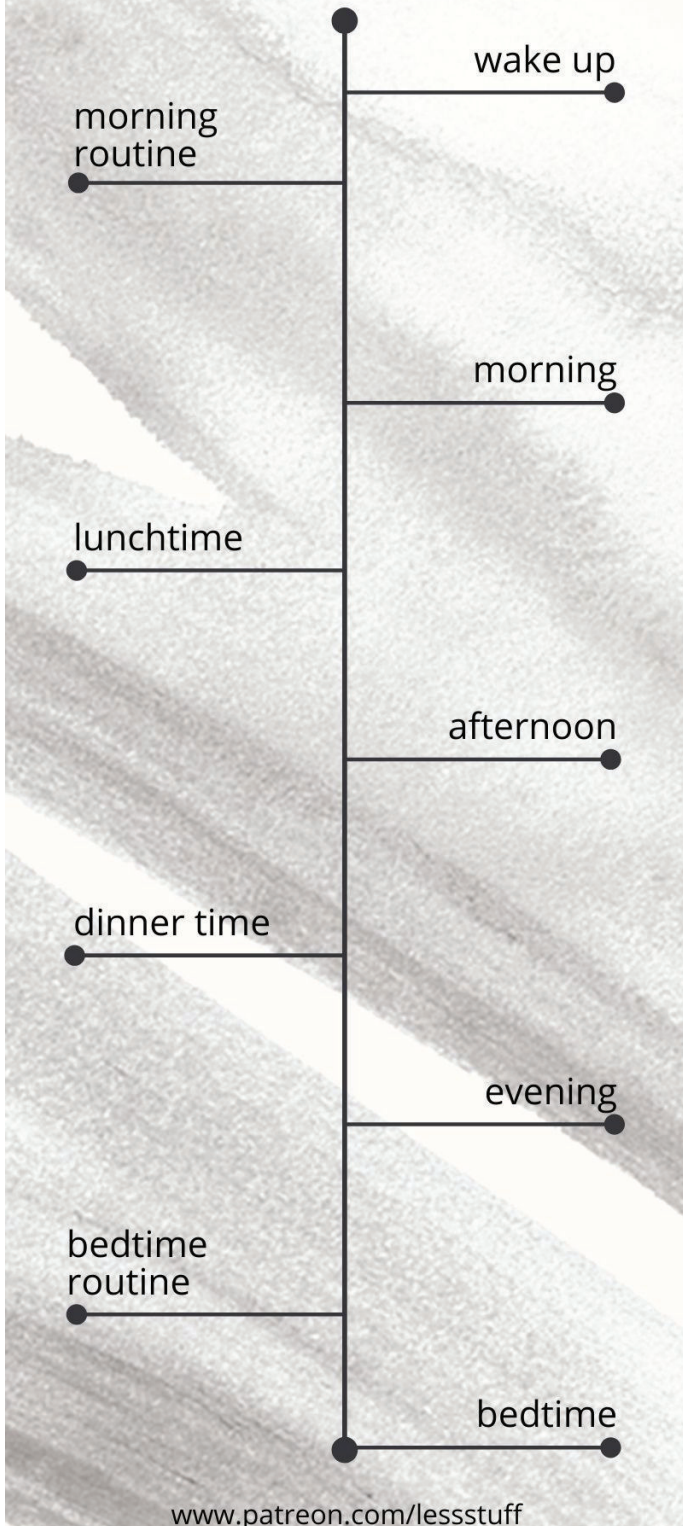
Find the time

Use this timeline to write down what you do in a day and to find your existing habits.

Your days might be very different but they will probably have some constants like brushing your teeth and boiling the kettle.

If you work split shifts or have a week with big routine changes it might help to make more than one of these timelines.

Notes



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GENTLE JANUARY

existing habits

morning habits

afternoon habits

evening habits

bedtime habits

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What do you do now?

You probably have loads of regular habits that you are so used to you don't notice them. This page is to write down the things you do now. Once you know what you already do it will be easier to add in new things, and they are more likely to stick.

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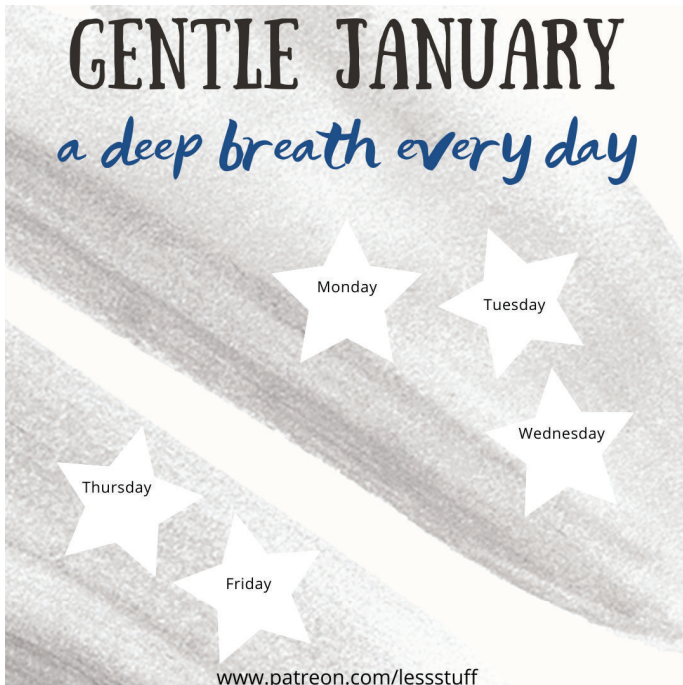
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WEEK 1

Breathe



Find a way to remember

What do you do every day? Boil the kettle, brush your teeth, draw the curtains? Pick one of these daily habits to remind you to take a breath. It may help to pop a post it reminder somewhere you will notice it.

Some things you might do every day:

- Take a shower/bath
- Brush your teeth
- Turn on/off computer
- Charge phone
- Draw curtains
- Check email
- Sitting on sofa

Different types of breathing

Last year I traded some website work for a course on Yogic Breathing with Faith Douglas.

I went into it not expecting a great deal to be honest, my nose is always blocked and my sleep is terrible. The first week I slept better, the second week my nose cleared up and as long as I practice 20 breaths 3 times a day, it stays clear.

I can't teach you what Faith taught me as it was tailored to what I needed but I can tell you about a really good way to relax and slow down which is called is box breathing. It was also taught to me on an anxiety course because if you are feeling panicked outside it is usually easy to find a rectangular frame or window of some sort and no one will think you are weird for looking at it.

In out, in out, it should be easy this breathing lark but all too often we just forget about it.

In moments of stress the worst thing you can do is hold your breath but it tends to be our default setting.

This week your tiny challenge is to remember to breathe.

Plant your feet on the floor, breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.

As often as you remember but at least once a day.

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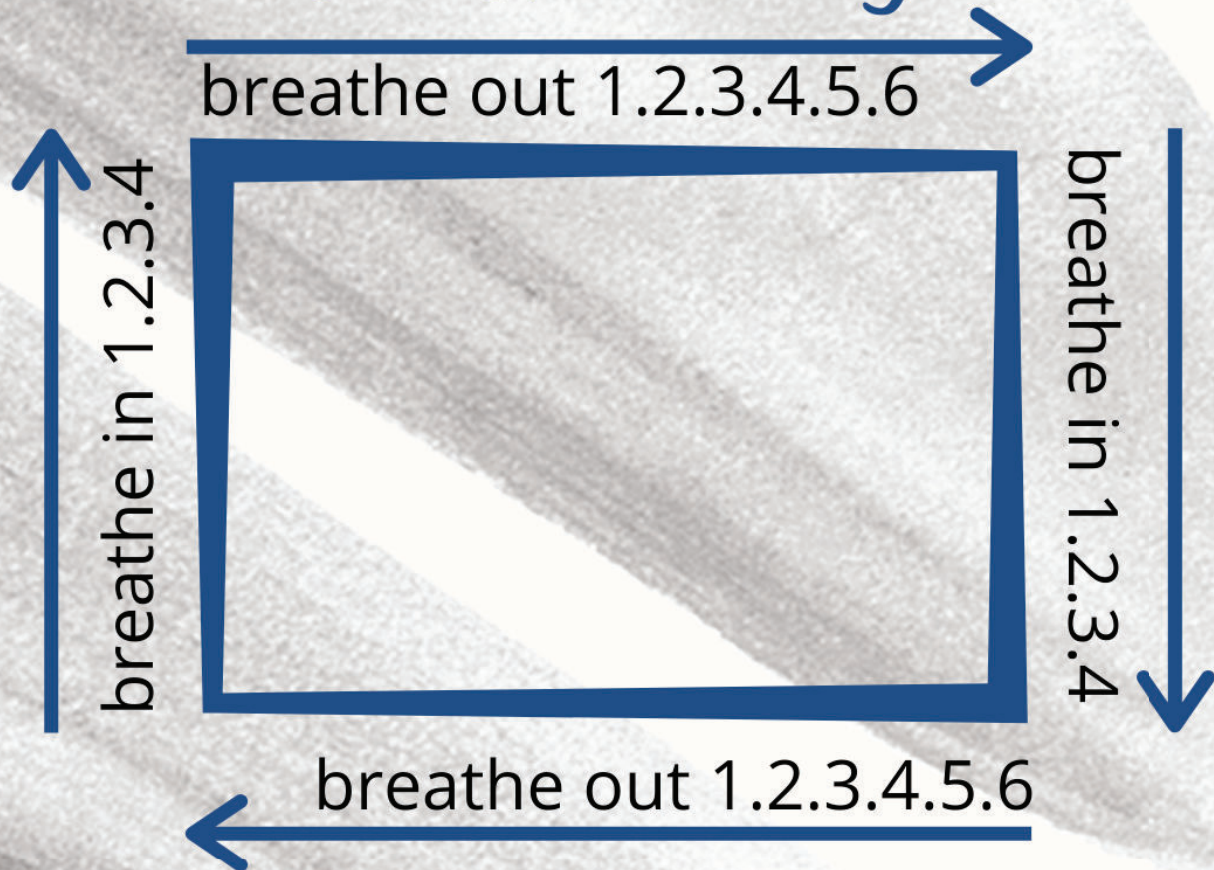
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box breathing



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1. Find something rectangular to look at.
2. Pick a corner and breathe in through your nose while counting to 4 and following a short line.
3. Breathe out to the count of 6 or 8, following the longer line to the next corner.
4. Use the next short line to help you breathe in through your nose to the count of 4.
5. Finish the rectangle by breathing out, through your nose or mouth, following the last long line to the starting point .
6. Repeat until things feel calmer.

Box breathing helps me settle when I can't sleep and makes me feel more in control of situations that are well out of my control. If you are interested in more types of breathing please look at Faith's website. I got a lot from her training. www.faithdouglas.co.uk

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Week 1 - Breathing Tracker

Week 1 - remember to breathe

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

What made this hard?

What made it easier?

Did it make me feel better?

yes	
no	

Did I enjoy it?

yes	
no	

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WEEK 2

Eat

Instead of giving something up as a resolution, how about adding something? I recently discovered that I actually like Brussels sprouts and I only found that out by experimenting with ways of cooking with them.

This week's challenge is try something different with seasonal veg.

Vegetables in season are cheaper and fresher, therefore better for our wallets and fuller of nutrients.

Northern hemisphere

In January in the UK we should be able to find these vegetables easily:

- Brussels sprouts
- Cabbages - crinkly savoy, green leafy and white and red.
- Celeriac
- Chicory
- Jerusalem artichokes
- Kale
- Leeks
- Parsnips
- Swedes

There are also nettles if you don't mind a bit of foraging. The young shoots can be used like spinach and make a nice soup. If you grab them quickly they don't sting but you can also just wear gloves! Cooking takes the sting away.

Southern hemisphere

If you are in the southern hemisphere your choice of seasonal food is very different. You should be able to find:

- Peas and beans
- Salad leaves
- Tomatoes
- Cucumber
- Courgette
- Aubergine
- Sweetcorn

Finding recipes

My go to place for recipe ideas is Pinterest. It is easy to use and you can save things you like in folders called boards.



Tasty sprouts

Cut the bottom off the sprouts and boil for 3 minutes.

Chop in half or quarters and fry in oil or butter with garlic.

Add bacon, bacon bits, sesame seeds, toasted nuts for texture.

This recipe works well for most veg and for courgettes and aubergine you don't need to boil first.

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JANUARY RECIPES

A different pasta sauce

Butternut Squash Pasta Sauce

Ingredients:

- Pasta (this works with spaghetti, penne or any other pasta shape)
- Butternut squash
- Olive oil
- Garlic
- Optional: milk, yoghurt, mixed herbs, paprika, chilli.

Peel and chop squash into chunks or slices.

Spread out on a baking tray with some olive oil and chopped garlic.

Roast at around 180 for 20 minutes.

When the squash is getting soft start the pasta off in boiling water. This gives the squash an extra ten minutes to develop more of a flavour by caramelizing.

Drain the pasta but save the water. It has starch that will make your sauce creamier.

Whizz up the squash, any chunks of garlic and some of the pasta water into a sauce. You can add yoghurt or milk if you want it creamier.

Mix into the pasta and serve.

Try this with paprika and chilli for a spicy version.



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JANUARY RECIPES

Tofu with taste

Tasty Crispy Tofu

You need:

- Firm tofu
- Soy sauce
- Sesame oil
- Garlic - crushed
- Strong spices, any of these: chilli, ground ginger, cumin, paprika
- Cornflour
- Oil for frying or greasing a tray
- Optional: sesame seeds, chilli flakes, salt, pepper.

This is my sisters fail safe recipe for delicious and crispy tofu.

Make a marinade from strong ingredients. like soy sauce, chilli flakes, sesame oil and/ or finely chopped ginger and garlic. Leave to marinade for an hour at least. Overnight is good too.

To make it crispy chop into cubes and dip into cornflour. You can add seasoning to the cornflour too, any combination of salt, pepper, chilli flakes, sesame seeds, ground ginger, cumin seeds will work well.

Shallow fry the cubes or place on a lightly oiled oven tray and bake for 20 minutes, turning regularly.

These make a nice snack and work very well in stir fries. Make in advance and heat them when needed, they are also nice cold.



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Week 2 - Eating Tracker

Week 2 - trying new ways of cooking, or different food

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

What made this hard?

What made it easier?

Did it make me feel better?

yes	
no	

Did I enjoy it?

yes	
no	

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WEEK 3

Drink

Too much information warning: I recently tried one of those blue things you put in the toilet cistern. It keeps the toilet nice and clean but the secondary benefit is that you can tell when you are really dehydrated because the water in the bowl goes green.

Your challenge for this week is to drink a glass of water every now and then.

Add it to another habit

Pinning this onto an existing habit will make it easier to remember so have a think about where you are near a tap. Do you rinse with water when you brush your teeth? Would then be a good time to drink some? How about when you are washing dishes? Can you grab a glass of water before you fill the washing up bowl?

I drink a few cups of tea a day so I just need to find a way to remember to have a glass of water first.

Some people find filling a water bottle in the morning and keeping it with them all day helps. Others find that ticking off the glasses of water they have in a day, or colouring something in helps.

This week's challenge isn't to go for the full 8 glasses a day, it is just to add one glass in during the day if you don't do it already.

Already hydrated? You get a week off! Well done.



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GENTLE JANUARY

Week 3 - Drinking Tracker

Week 3 - staying hydrated

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

What made this hard?

What made it easier?

Did it make me feel better?

yes	
no	

Did I enjoy it?

yes	
no	

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WEEK 4

Sleep

Sleep is my nemesis but I know how vital it is. This week focuses on the environment we sleep in rather than our habits. I know I sleep better in a tidy bedroom and it is much nicer to wake up to one.

Your challenge this week is to make your bedroom as relaxing as possible.

This might mean dealing with the floordrobe. It might mean making your bed every day

What little things can you do to make your bedroom nicer?

This is not a challenge to overhaul the whole room, nor to declutter your entire wardrobe. All you are looking for are little ways you can make a difference.

Here are some ideas based on my bedroom but your room will be different to mine:

- Dust and Hoover
- Get rid of some books I'll never read again
- Get rid of the socks with holes in
- Wash the window
- Put things away
- Pack away clean summer clothes
- Give duvet and blankets an airing on a dry day
- Open the windows wide and let the fresh air in for a while
- Bring in a houseplant or a vase of flowers.



Better sleep

If you want to try to improve your sleep hygiene these ideas will help. This is a very brief version of an excellent post from www.sleepfoundation.org

- Keep your routine consistent
- Budget 30 minutes for winding down
- Dim your lights
- Unplug from electronics
- Meditate and breathe
- Get up after 20 minutes of not sleeping

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GENTLE JANUARY

Week 4 - Sleep Environment Tracker

Week 4 - Tiny actions to make my bedroom more comfy

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

What made this hard?

What made it easier?

Did it make me feel better?

yes	
no	

Did I enjoy it?

yes	
no	

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GENTLE JANUARY

What Worked?

Use this page to remind you what worked and what didn't.

There is space for you to write notes or ideas too.

<i>Decluttering bingo</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Breathing exercises</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Trying new food</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Drinking more water</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Making my bedroom nicer</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>

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