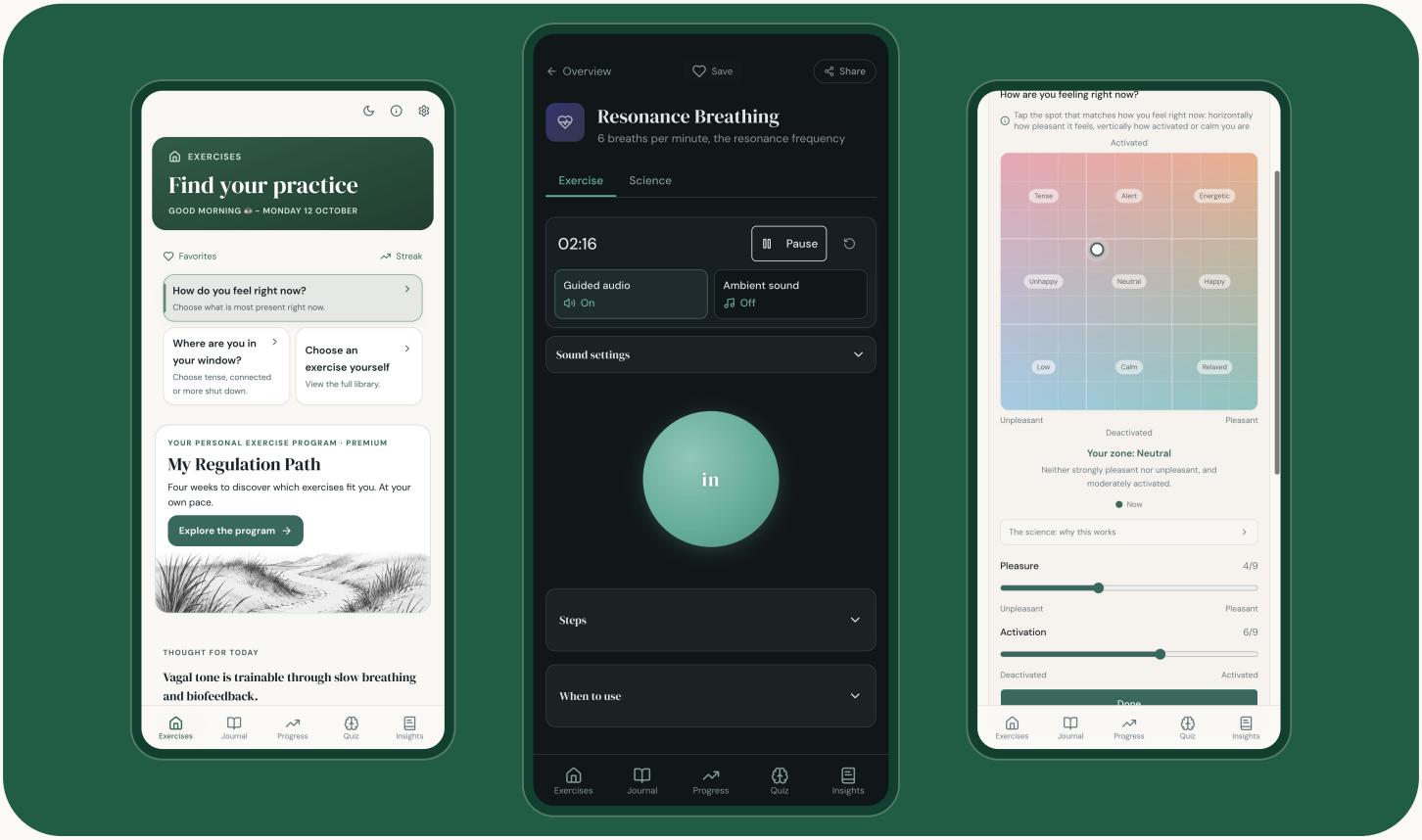
BACK TO SAFETY

What does your nervous system need right now?

A practical start guide for stress, recovery and everyday moments.

Notice · choose · practise · reflect



35 practices. Eight free to get started.

With a choice guide, a seven-day experiment and a fillable personal card.

Audrey de Jong · clinical psychologist and psychotherapist

Updated for app 1.3.0 · 13 October 2026

PRACTICAL START GUIDE

Start with one practice

You do not need to read this guide from beginning to end.

A simple first route

Open the app and tap How do you feel right now? or Where are you in your window?. Choose one free practice. Notice how you feel before and after. Add a sentence about what you noticed if you wish.

Use what fits today

The eight free practices are enough for the first steps in this guide. No account is needed. Premium is optional. Follow the instructions in the app while practising; this guide helps you choose and reflect.

Find your way and choose a direction	3
Eight free practices	5
All 35 practices and two new additions	7
Check-ins and practice in everyday life	9
A seven-day experiment	11
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When something does not fit, Premium and background	15

App Store · iPhone and iPad

Google Play · Android

PRACTICAL START GUIDE

For more moments than you might think

You do not have to wait until stress becomes a problem.

Back to Safety can help you explore how you respond to demands: at work, at home, while caring for others or during recovery. Practice is not an instruction to remove every feeling. You are learning to notice what you need and identify a manageable next step.

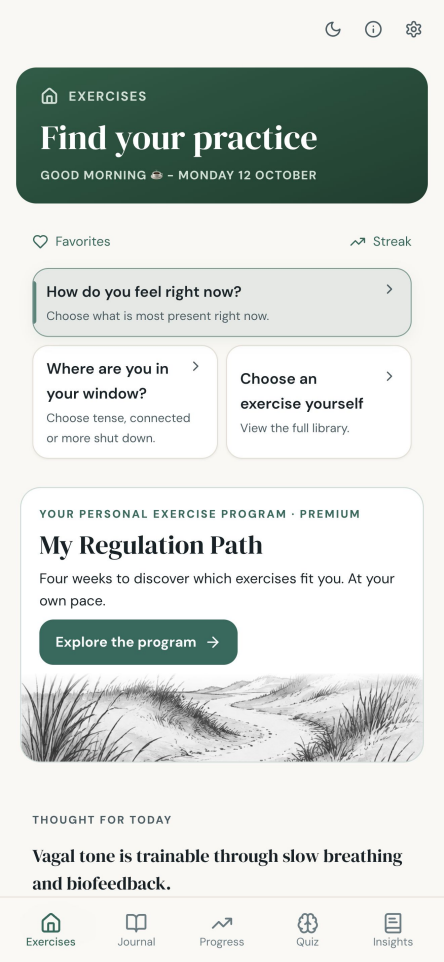
Work and responsibility	Before a difficult conversation, between tasks or when returning home.
Care and family	When you have been caring for others and want to check in with yourself.
Pain, illness and recovery	To notice added tension or narrowed attention. The app does not treat the underlying condition.
Sleep and evenings	To explore the transition towards rest, without turning sleep into a performance.
Presenting and performing	To retain useful activation while keeping a broad awareness.

Calmer is not always the goal

With high tension, slowing down may help. With numbness or disconnection, orienting or gentle movement may fit better. This distinction is a choice guide, not a diagnosis.

PRACTICAL START GUIDE

Three routes from the home screen



1. How do you feel right now?

Choose what stands out. The suggestions are starting points to try, not prescriptions.

2. Where are you in your window?

Notice whether you feel mainly tense, connected or numb. Use your own signals, rather than seeking an ideal answer.

3. Choose an exercise yourself

Open the full library or repeat a familiar practice. Favourites help you find familiar choices again.

What follows

Brief check-in → one practice → after-check → an optional note. After several sessions, look at Journal and Progress. You can skip a check-in; without a complete before-and-after pair, that session cannot contribute to an average change score.

The images show the current app with fictional example data.

PRACTICAL START GUIDE

Eight free practices · 1/2

Follow the full instructions in the app while practising.

Window Check

May suit: When you are unsure what you need.
Try: Notice high activation, presence or disconnection.
Notice: Which body and attention signals do you recognise?
Keep it manageable: The window is a reflection model, not a test or diagnosis.
Why: Naming signals helps you choose a direction; the model does not establish a state.

Physiological Sigh

May suit: Tension when a brief breathing structure feels helpful.
Try: Follow the app’s double inhale and long exhale, without forcing.
Notice: Is it easier to return to your activity afterwards?
Keep it manageable: Stop if dizzy or short of breath; return to natural breathing.
Why: Research tested five minutes daily for a month, not this brief app practice [2].

Resonance Breathing

May suit: A wish for a steady breathing rhythm.
Try: Follow the breathing circle; keep your breath gentle and comfortable.
Notice: Is the pace comfortable, and can you keep your attention broad?
Keep it manageable: The app does not measure your personal resonance frequency or heart-rate variability.
Why: Slow breathing can increase heart-rate variability. This does not prove stress reduction for you [3].

Humming

May suit: When sound and vibration feel comfortable.
Try: Hum gently on the out-breath, without pushing.
Notice: How does the vibration affect attention and presence?
Keep it manageable: Reduce duration and volume if it strains your throat or breathing.
Why: Rhythm, sound and vibration give your attention something concrete to follow.

Every practice includes instructions and a separate Science tab.

PRACTICAL START GUIDE

Eight free practices · 2/2

Follow the full instructions in the app while practising.

5-4-3-2-1 Grounding

May suit: Tunnel vision, restlessness or feeling distant from your surroundings.
Try: Follow the sensory steps and gently look around.
Notice: Does the room become clearer? What is your next step?
Keep it manageable: Counting need not be perfect; you can adapt the sequence.
Why: You attend to current sensory information. Direct effectiveness evidence is limited [5].

Safe Place

May suit: When a place of calm or support feels believable.
Try: Use a real, remembered or imagined place.
Notice: Which details genuinely offer you some support?
Keep it manageable: A neutral or pleasant place is fine. Do not force a feeling of safety.
Why: Supportive details offer a focus for attention. A calmer feeling is not guaranteed.

Box Breathing

May suit: When counting and structure offer something to follow.
Try: Follow the four-part rhythm only while it feels comfortable.
Notice: Does the structure support attention, or become a demanding task?
Keep it manageable: Choose a rhythm without holds if holding your breath feels unpleasant.
Why: Counting and equal phases structure the breath. Holds do not feel comfortable for everyone.

Bilateral Tapping

May suit: When a gentle left-right rhythm feels comfortable.
Try: Tap alternately while staying connected to your surroundings.
Notice: Do you feel more present? Does the rhythm remain manageable?
Keep it manageable: Do not use this to process traumatic memories on your own.
Why: Rhythm and touch direct attention. This is not a stand-alone trauma treatment [6].

Every practice includes instructions and a separate Science tab.

PRACTICAL START GUIDE

The library: 35 practices · 1/2

Eight free. 27 additional practices with Premium.

Breathing

Breathing pace, exhalation and rhythm.

Physiological Sigh (free)
Resonance Breathing (free)
Extended Exhalation (Premium)
Soothing Breath (Premium)
4-7-8 Breathing (Premium)
Box Breathing (free)
Personal Paced Breathing (Premium)
Lion's Breath (Premium)

Grounding

Contact with surroundings, support and sensory information.

5-4-3-2-1 Grounding (free)
Safe Place (free)
Butterfly Hug (Premium)
Havening (Premium)
Orientation Reflex Exercise (Premium)
Safe Place Visualisation (Extended) (Premium)

Voice and senses

Vocal vibration, sound and sensory input.

Humming (free)
Cold Water on the Face (Premium)
Vocalising and Singing (Premium)

Choose by purpose

Look for something that supports what you want to do: slow down, orient, become more alert, notice tension or build support. Categories help organise choices; they do not dictate what you should feel.

PRACTICAL START GUIDE

The library: 35 practices · 2/2

Eight free. 27 additional practices with Premium.

Awareness

Attention, body signals, thoughts and feelings.

Window Check (free)
Body Scan with Tracking (Premium)
Gratitude Practice (Premium)
Peripheral Vision (Premium)
STOP Practice (Premium)
Step Back from Worrying Thoughts (Premium · new)
Make Room for Feelings (Premium · new)
Pendulation (Premium)
Interoceptive Body Check (Premium)
Autogenic training (Premium)

Movement

Movement, rhythm and muscle relaxation.

Deliberate Yawning (Premium)
Progressive Muscle Relaxation (Premium)
Bilateral Tapping (free)
Green Walk (Premium)

Compassion

Self-kindness and support.

Compassionate Touch (Premium)
Co-regulation (Premium)
Loving-Kindness Meditation (Premium)
Slow self-stroking (Premium)

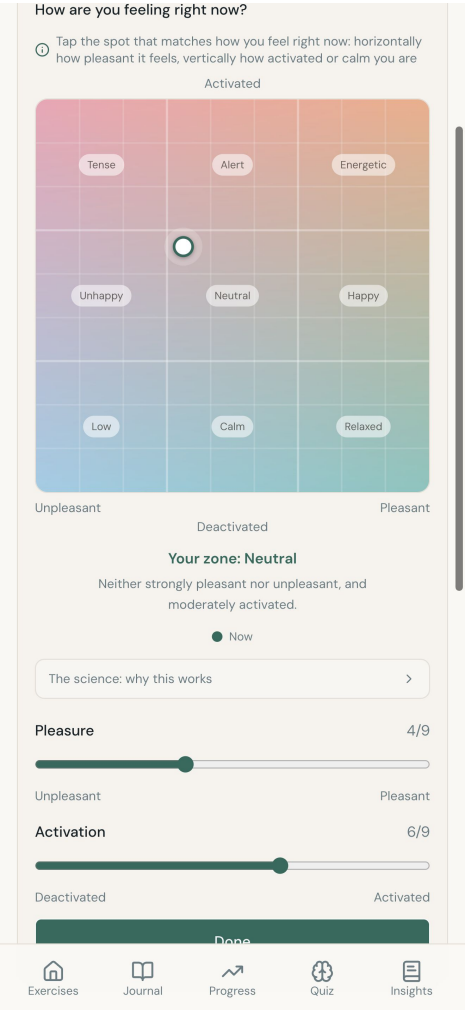
New: thoughts and feelings

Step Back from Worrying Thoughts helps you notice a thought as a thought. Make Room for Feelings invites you to acknowledge a feeling, find support and choose a small next step. They draw on defusion and acceptance [11-13]. Research tested different protocols; these brief app versions have not been studied separately. They use on-screen instructions, without spoken guidance.

PRACTICAL START GUIDE

Check in without judging yourself

A snapshot of how you feel. Not a test of your nervous system.



Two dimensions

The Affect Grid asks about pleasure and activation [1]. How unpleasant or pleasant do you feel? How low or high is your activation?

Changes can take different forms

More pleasant need not mean calmer. Greater activation may be useful if you felt numb or disconnected. An unchanged score can still accompany a useful insight.

Not proof of an effect

Your check-ins are self-reports. A before-and-after pair does not establish what caused a change or provide a diagnosis. Look at repeated observations and context.

Three questions afterwards

What changed? What stayed the same? What can I do now, or what do I need? A brief note helps connect the scores with your own experience.

PRACTICAL START GUIDE

A practice in your own day

These examples are possible routes to explore, not treatment advice.

Moment	Possible route	Purpose
Before a conversation	Window Check or 5-4-3-2-1. Premium: Peripheral Vision.	Widen awareness and stay present.
Between tasks	A familiar free practice. Premium: STOP Practice.	Mark the transition deliberately.
After work or caregiving	Humming or Safe Place. Premium: Green Walk.	Notice what recovery needs today.
While waiting	5-4-3-2-1 or Bilateral Tapping.	Find support in your current surroundings.
With physical strain	Gentle orientation, adapted to your capacity.	Notice additional tension without explaining away symptoms.
With little energy	Window Check. A few manageable movements outside the app may also fit.	Build contact and presence without forcing.
Towards evening	Humming, Safe Place or a comfortable breathing rhythm.	Explore a transition towards rest, without forcing sleep.

With pain, illness or recovery, the app remains an additional support. Follow the advice of your care provider and adapt practice to what is physically manageable.

PRACTICAL START GUIDE

A seven-day personal experiment

You can skip or repeat days. The aim is to learn how to choose.

1 · Notice	Try Window Check at a calm moment. Note one signal you would like to notice earlier.
2 · A brief pause	Choose one free practice during mild tension. Then return to your planned activity.
3 · Rhythm	Try Resonance Breathing or Humming. Attend to comfort rather than perfect performance.
4 · Surroundings	Explore 5-4-3-2-1. What changes in your attention to the space around you?
5 · Support	Try Safe Place. A pleasant or neutral place is fine.
6 · An everyday moment	Use a familiar practice before a conversation, while waiting or after work.
7 · Reflect	Review your notes and available Progress. Choose one practice to repeat and one to compare.

A beginning, not a programme that must solve everything

You can complete this experiment using only the free practices. One week is not proof of effectiveness. It may help you find an initial suitable choice. Use the personal card on page 14.

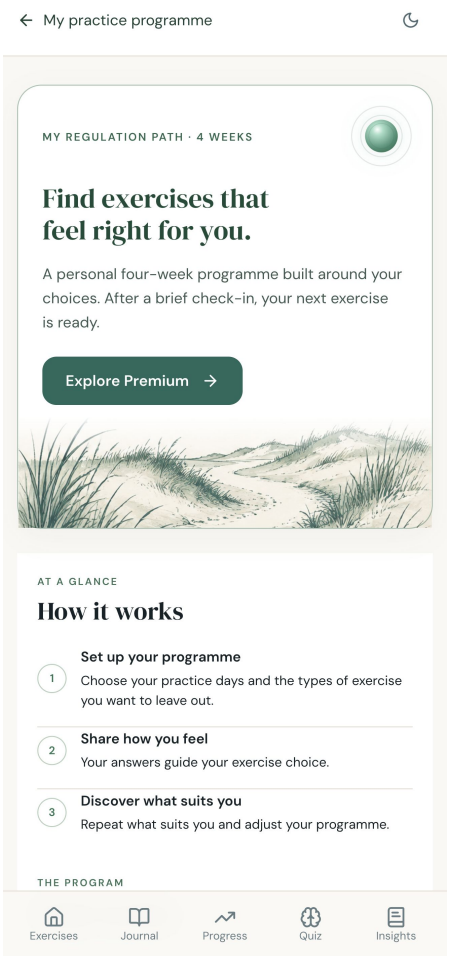
Would you like to continue with a personal practice routine?

Explore My Regulation Path and Premium →

PRACTICAL START GUIDE

My Regulation Path: at your pace

A personal four-week practice programme within Premium.



Choose a manageable rhythm

Set your direction, practice days and preferences. Indicate which kinds of practice you would rather skip. Daily practice is not required.

A suggestion after your check-in

The programme uses your choices and check-in to suggest a practice. This is not a diagnosis. You can explore whether the suggestion fits.

Reflect and adjust

Afterwards, indicate how well the practice suited you. Use what you notice to clarify your own preferences.

Four weeks: notice · try different approaches · repeat what fits · make it your own.

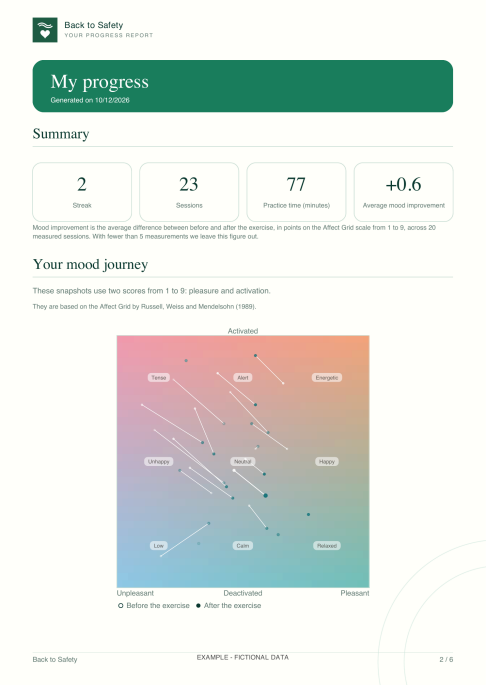
Your regulation card in the app

Bring suitable practices, early signals and sources of support together. Save or print the available card as a PDF or pocket card. You can also use the fillable card in this guide without Premium.

PRACTICAL START GUIDE

Journal, Progress and your report

Scores become more useful when you connect them with experience.


Back to Safety
YOUR PROGRESS REPORT

My progress
Generated on 10/12/2026

Summary

2 Streak
23 Sessions
77 Practice time (minutes)
+0.6 Average mood improvement

Mood improvement is the average difference between before and after the exercise, in points on the Affect Grid scale from 1 to 9, across 20 measured sessions. With fewer than 5 measurements we leave this figure out.

Your mood journey

These snapshots use two scores from 1 to 9: pleasure and activation.

They are based on the Affect Grid by Russell, Weiss and Mendelsohn (1989).

Activated
Tense
Alert
Energetic
Unhappy
Neutral
Happy
Low
Calm
Relaxed
Unpleasant
Deactivated
Pleasant
Before the exercise
After the exercise

Back to Safety
EXAMPLE - FICTIONAL DATA
2 / 6

A note need not be long

Note what happened beforehand, what you noticed during the practice and what you needed afterwards. Example: “Looked around after a busy conversation. Still tense, but I could listen again.”

Free and Premium

The free Journal shows your last seven sessions, with limited Progress. Premium opens the full history and PDF export for Journal and Progress.

A report for a chosen period

Choose the period you want to review when exporting. Include personal notes only when you wish; notes follow the selected sessions. Journal and Progress can be exported separately.

Read the captions

Check how many complete measurements contribute to a figure. Trend charts can use their own time window; their captions explain this. A streak or most-used practice tells you something different from a change in feeling.

Sharing is your choice

The app stores your practice and journal data locally. A PDF you send contains information you choose to share. Before sharing, consider whether to include your notes. The example shown uses fictional data and is not a promised outcome.

View the full sample report →

PRACTICAL START GUIDE

My personal regulation card

Fill this in using a compatible PDF reader, or print this page. Keep choices small and specific.

My early signs that tension is rising

My early signs of disconnection or low energy

One practice I want to try when tension is high

One practice or step that helps me feel more present

What I want to be able to do afterwards

When I should stop, adapt or seek support

People, places or arrangements that support me

This is your own choice guide. You do not need to prove a feeling or result. Store completed files somewhere you consider appropriate.

PRACTICAL START GUIDE

When a practice does not fit

No clear change is information too.

The direction does not fit	Try orienting to the environment instead of focusing on breathing, or suitable movement instead of slowing down.
You pushed too hard	Reduce the intensity of breathing, duration or focus. More intensity is not automatically better.
It became a performance	Let go of counting or an expected result. Choose something simple that remains manageable.
You started late	Next time, try a familiar practice when you notice an earlier signal.
The context was difficult	Explore where and when the same practice is useful. This technique does not have to suit you.

Stopping or adapting is a choice

Stop if you become clearly more dizzy, short of breath, disconnected or agitated. Return to your natural breathing, look around or seek support. Discuss recurring or severe symptoms with an appropriate health professional.

Also ask afterwards: why did I choose this, what happened and what do I need now?

PRACTICAL START GUIDE

What Premium adds

More choices, a personal programme and fuller reflection.

Library	All 35 practices: 8 free and 27 additional practices.
Personal programme	My Regulation Path over four weeks, with direction, preferences, check-ins and your regulation card.
Guidance	Spoken guidance for selected practices. Visuals, tones and haptics where available. Not every practice has audio.
Insights	All 7 articles with explanations, sources and worksheets. The Science tab for the eight free practices is also free.
Journal and reports	Full history and PDF export for Journal and Progress, with optional personal notes.
Ambient sound	The full sound library, including ocean, rain, piano, forest birds and calm.

You see the price before purchase

Choose a monthly or annual subscription in the app. You see the current store price before confirming. The subscription renews automatically and can be cancelled through the app store where you subscribed. New content in updates is included while your subscription is active.

The seven in-depth articles

An overloaded nervous system · Window of Tolerance · Micro-moments of safety · Breathing and autonomic regulation · Shame and self-compassion · Dissociation and grounding · Sleep and recovery

Explore Premium in the app

Open Back to Safety and view the Premium offer. You see the price before purchase.

App Store · iPhone / iPad

Google Play · Android

PRACTICAL START GUIDE

Good to know

A resource, not a treatment

Back to Safety provides self-help and psychoeducation. It does not diagnose conditions or replace appropriate medical or psychological care. Practise only when your attention is available; do not practise while driving or doing other tasks that require full attention.

Your care comes first

Adapt practice to your physical abilities. If you have medical restrictions or are unsure, discuss this with your health professional. In immediate danger, call your local emergency number. In the Netherlands, this is 112.

Why Audrey created the app

Audrey de Jong is a clinical psychologist and psychotherapist and owner of GGZ IJssel-Berkel B.V. She created Back to Safety to make practical exercises and careful explanations available beyond the therapy room. The aim is to help you discover what fits you, without telling you what you should feel.

Your data

No account is needed. Practice and journal data are stored locally on your device. Save important exports yourself if you want a lasting copy. The app store processes subscriptions; this is separate from your personal check-ins.

Website and current information

Privacy **Terms**

info@ggzijsselberkel.nl

App Store

Google Play

This guide may be shared unchanged. © 2026 GGZ IJssel-Berkel B.V.

PRACTICAL START GUIDE

Science: what do we know, and what remains uncertain?

Research on slow breathing, breathwork and self-compassion supports possible benefits, but protocols and outcomes vary [2-4, 7]. The effectiveness of specific grounding techniques has not yet been adequately studied [5]. Research on dual tasks during memory recall does not establish self-directed tapping as a trauma treatment [6].

Not every app practice has been studied as a complete intervention. The Science tab distinguishes research, possible mechanisms and clinical application. Your own check-ins do not establish a proven treatment effect.

1. Russell, Weiss & Mendelsohn (1989). Affect Grid: A single-item scale of pleasure and arousal. JPSP, 57, 493-502. DOI / source

2. Balban et al. (2023). Brief structured respiration practices enhance mood and reduce physiological arousal. Cell Reports Medicine, 4, 100895. DOI / source

3. Laborde et al. (2022). Effects of voluntary slow breathing on heart rate and heart rate variability: A systematic review and a meta-analysis. NBR, 138, 104711. DOI / source

4. Fincham et al. (2023). Effect of breathwork on stress and mental health: A meta-analysis of randomised-controlled trials. Scientific Reports, 13, 432. DOI / source

5. Hammond & Brown (2025, online). Building an Operational Definition of Grounding. Trauma, Violence, & Abuse. DOI / source

6. Mertens, Lund & Engelhard (2021). The effectiveness of dual-task interventions for modulating emotional memories in the laboratory: A meta-analysis. Acta Psychologica, 220, 103424. DOI / source

7. Han & Kim (2023). Effects of Self-Compassion Interventions on Reducing Depressive Symptoms, Anxiety, and Stress: A Meta-Analysis. Mindfulness, 14, 1553-1581. DOI / source

8. Muhammad Khir et al. (2024). Efficacy of Progressive Muscle Relaxation in Adults for Stress, Anxiety, and Depression: A Systematic Review. PRBM, 17, 345-365. DOI / source

9. Stetter & Kupper (2002). Autogenic training: a meta-analysis of clinical outcome studies. Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback, 27, 45-98. DOI / source

10. Packheiser et al. (2024). A systematic review and multivariate meta-analysis of the physical and mental health benefits of touch interventions. Nature Human Behaviour, 8, 1088-1107. DOI / source

11. World Health Organization (2020). Doing What Matters in Times of Stress: An Illustrated Guide. DOI / source

12. Larsson et al. (2016). Using Brief Cognitive Restructuring and Cognitive Defusion Techniques to Cope With Negative Thoughts. Behavior Modification, 40, 452-482. DOI / source

13. Lindsay et al. (2018). Acceptance lowers stress reactivity: Dismantling mindfulness training in a randomized controlled trial. Psychoneuroendocrinology, 87, 63-73. DOI / source

Guide version 6.1 · 13 October 2026 · checked against app 1.3.0. Updated from the original guide; app features may change in future releases.