

The 531 formula podcast by Ross Anderson**Podcast transcript**

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Of all the tactics, I find mental training the most important. And a simple system that you can use is one that I've learned over the years, and that is called the five three one formula for optimal mental health.

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531, which literally means and can take you less than eight minutes. So it's five minutes of meditation, which I'll teach you to do in just a second. It's three things to be grateful for. And it's one act of kindness. And this formula, engaging this every single day will reduce anxiety and stress, boost positive emotion, and improve long term health outcomes. Clinically proven, and all you need to do is take eight minutes every single day.

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And if you're someone who's making the excuse and says, "well, I don't have eight minutes in my day", I would counter that argument by stating that the average person spends 90 minutes on Facebook alone, each and every single day. The average person watches on average 4.5 hours of TV per day and checks the phone 52 times. And to be honest, a lot of us go to the toilet and sit in the toilet a lot longer than eight minutes. And so, there's very, very many opportunities throughout your day where you could use eight minutes wisely, consciously, effectively, to really reduce your anxiety and optimise your mind and body.

1:31

Okay, meditation. Here's how you meditate, simply, in 60 seconds. People have these misconceptions about meditation, that it's for spiritual, "woo-woo", "hippy-dippy" types or academic sciencey types. When really the process of meditation is quite simple.

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Sit upright. We're going to be breathing through our noses remember nasal breathing, deep diaphragmatic breathing. You're going to bring your attention to the now, the present moment.

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Laser focus on the sensations of the body, you're going to breathe in for six, hold for two, exhale for seven, you'll do it four times over. You've just meditated for a minute. If you get any thoughts, those are normal. Come back to your reference point, your anchor - when we throw an anchor overboard from a boat, what does that do? It serves to keep us fixed and grounded in the present moment. Even though we may drift left or right, we remain grounded. That's what happens when you get thoughts. You dwell on them. You return to your reference point. You're anchored, which is your breath. So let's give that a little try.

2:34

Ground yourself. Get comfortable. Sit upright. And here goes.

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Breathe in through the nose for six.

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Hold for two and exhale through the nose for seven.

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Again, breathe in for six.

2:58

Hold for two...

3:01

Exhale for seven.

3:06

Do it one more time,

3:09

Breathe in for six.

3:10

Hold for two.

3:17

Exhale for seven.

3:23

Open your eyes. And just for one moment, become aware of how you feel now, as opposed to how you felt just a few seconds ago.

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That is meditation in its simplest sense. If you break all forms of meditation down to their simplest component parts, you set a clear intention for what you want. You identify a clear anchor, something to keep you grounded and fixed in the present moment. Understand that thoughts are normal and that when you dwell on them just return to your anchor, sit upright in a calm, confident, dignified manner, and focus on your breath, focus on the present moment and sensations of the air coming in through the nose and out through the mouth. And if you struggled to meditate like that, maybe then you can just chuck on some...what's the term for them again? Wheels. The wheels when you're in a cycle when you're younger and you're just practising on your bike, you need some stabilisers, that's the name for them - stabilisers. Use those stabilisers as an easy entry point, if you will.

4:38

That's much like how a guided meditation works and those are the stabilisers. Then when you get used to it, you can take the stabilisers off and you can try and meditate for 10-15 minutes using that method, but for now we only need to do it for 3, 5 minutes even where we breathe in for six, hold for two, exhale for seven while bearing in mind those things. You can watch meditation 101 for more tips on this.

5:00

Next, three things to be grateful for. Whenever I ask someone, you know, think of one thing that can grateful for - if it's their first time, they struggle. And one of the better, most efficient tactics would be to think of one thing you value in life right now. One thing you value, one thing you love. What is that? Bring it to mind.

5:25

Now imagine. Close your eyes for a second. And imagine you woke up tomorrow. And that thing was gone. Person, place, thing, your house, your mother or father, dog, car. Really feeling an emotion of waking up and losing that thing tomorrow? How would you feel? Now for me, it would probably be my home. I love my home. It's a shelter, it provides me with lots of benefits, it's aesthetically pleasing, it's my sanctuary, if you will. it's designed in a way that makes me feel happy. If I woke up tomorrow and for some unfortunate reason, I did not have my home, maybe it was, you know, pulled down in some form of natural disaster, or went up in flames due to some freak accident, and I didn't have my home. I'd be upset, I'd be sad, I'd be stressed.

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And I would ultimately have to engage in all these activities that would be painful. Now, I value that and then you will have something that you value. And in the process of thinking about not having that in your life, there may be some resistance. It should, if you're doing it right, it should be emotional. But now you have something to be grateful for. Now you have something to be grateful for. Thinking of three things to be grateful for just takes a few moments, in the morning and the evening.

6:51

And now one act of kindness. Doing kind things... kindness is king. Kindness is king and by doing a kind thing you really can wear that emotion - you don't just help someone else. You help yourself because you serve to produce oxytocin, the kind of love and self-compassion neurotransmitter, in your body. And there's multiple research studies showing that the differences between engaging indulgent behaviours like going to the movies, going to the cinema, shopping... those sorts of things in comparison with philanthropic activities and helpful activities, kind activities such as doing the dishes for someone, cleaning the house, or maybe going over and above the kind of normal predetermined behaviours in society. Maybe you take someone's bags off them, an elderly pensioner, who's walking down the street struggling - you take their bags off them and you offer them help and you walk with them for a few blocks. You take that time out your day, just to be philanthropic and help them in a very genuine way.

7:59

See, there's two questions you can ask yourself, you can wake up and ask yourself, "what can the world do for me?" Or you can ask yourself "what can I do for the world?" And believe me, through experience, asking yourself what can I do for the world and responding to that answer by engaging in kind and philanthropic activities can be a game changer, not just for your immediate experience, but for your long term health and fulfilment.

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