Personal Action Worksheet

Your one-behavior plan, built the way you'd build one for a client

How to use this worksheet
Everything the course shows as a list, a table, or a chart is written out here. Fill it in during the guided practices, or come back to it when you have ten quiet minutes. The whole plan comes down to one thing: **pick one behavior.** Not three. Just the one you can actually do this week.

Foundation first. These ten behaviors are the foundation. In my coaching, I like to see them in place for at least a couple of months before investigating deeper symptoms, because when the foundation is shaky, it's hard to tell what's a hormone issue and what's a missed lunch and five hours of sleep. That's my coaching guideline, not a rule, and it's never instead of your physician. If something feels off, get it checked now, and build the foundation at the same time.

1. Body check-in

From Guided Practice 1. Circle or check any that sound familiar. There's nothing to fix yet. You're observing, the same way you would for a client.

☐	Waking up around 3 a.m. and not being able to fall back asleep
☐	Feeling wired but tired at night
☐	Craving salty or crunchy snacks in the afternoon
☐	Feeling jittery after your second or third coffee
☐	Crashing hard around 2 or 3 p.m.

What else do you notice in your body on a hard week?

_____

_____

2. The ABC of burnout

The three-term contingency, turned on ourselves, with a fourth column for the hormone response. These are examples of a pattern, not a diagnosis, and they can mix and match.

Antecedent (work condition)	Behavior	Hormone response (what research links it to)
High workload	Working 40+ hours a week	Cortisol up, thyroid output down. Fatigue and anxiety build over time.
Constant pings (email, texts, team chat)	Sleeping less than 7 hours	Lower melatonin and lower leptin. You don't feel rested or full.
Emotional strain	Reaching for sugary snacks	Insulin up, and ghrelin can follow. The spike and crash.
Time scarcity	Skipping meals and breaks	Cortisol and ghrelin can rise. Hungry and wired at the same time.
Perfectionism	Falling behind, because the work never feels done	Cortisol up, thyroid down.
Low support	Working in isolation and guessing	Cortisol up, leptin down.
Pressure to perform	More caffeine or other substances	Adrenaline up, melatonin down. On edge by day, can't settle at night.

The loop in plain words. Work conditions set up certain behaviors. Those behaviors shift your hormones. And your hormones make the next behavior more likely. Behavior changes hormones, and hormones change the next behavior.

3. The ten hormone-friendly behaviors

Actions you can see and count that help your body's hormones work the way they should. These are starting points, not rules. Your schedule, your body, your health history, and what your physician tells you come first.

Behavior	Definition
Eating and hydration	
1. Eating enough, consistently	Eating the amount of food your body needs for the day you actually have, at roughly the same amount and roughly the same times, ideally all seven days. Five or more days counts as consistent.
2. Meal timing	A first meal within 90 minutes to 2 hours of waking, then eating every 3 to 4 hours. *The exact window is my coaching guideline. Research on meal timing is still limited.*
3. Balanced meals and snacks	Protein, fat, fiber, and carbs at meals, and two or three of those at snacks. Carbs are kindling; protein, fat, and fiber are the logs.
4. Mindful eating	Three steps: one to three deep breaths before you eat; utensils down between bites, chewing to about an applesauce texture; and cutting distractions (phone, music, session notes, podcasts).
5. Hydration	About half your body weight (pounds) in ounces of water a day. 150 lb = about 75 oz. *My coaching guideline.* For reference, the National Academies put total water for women at about 91 oz a day, including water from food.
Movement and recovery	
6. Strength training	A structured program of lifting weights or using resistance, in sets and repetitions, tracked and progressed over time. When burned out: 2 to 3 sessions a week with at least 3 rest days. *My coaching guideline.*
7. Strategic cardio	When you're exhausted, favor walking and moderate intensity over long, hard sessions. Save higher intensity for when you're recovering well.
8. Walking	At least 7,000 steps a day. *My coaching guideline.* Five- to ten-minute walks add up.
9. Sleep	At least 7 hours a night. If sleep feels impossible right now, it doesn't have to be your first goal. It often follows once nutrition and movement improve.
10. Regulating your nervous system	Physically practicing the shift into rest and digest, on purpose, at least once a day. Slow breathing, humming, gargling, cold water on your face, or progressive muscle relaxation (see section 9).

4. Indirect behavior assessment

A self-report that tells you where to start, and sets you up to collect a real baseline.

Step 1	Check each behavior you already do consistently, five or more days a week. Those are your strengths. Leave them alone for now.
Step 2	Rate each one you're not consistent with yet, from 1 to 10. **1 = "I could start this tomorrow"** without much effort. **10 = "this would be really hard to start tomorrow."**
Step 3	Pick ONE behavior: the one that feels most doable, usually one of your lowest numbers. Not the one you think you should do. The one you can actually do this week.
Step 4	Collect baseline data. Track that one behavior for about a week, just as it is, before you change anything.

Behavior	Yes, I'm consistent 5+ days	Rate 1 to 10	Start date	Mastered date
1. Eating enough, consistently				
2. Meal timing				
3. Balanced meals and snacks				
4. Mindful eating				
5. Hydration				
6. Strength training				
7. Strategic cardio				
8. Walking				
9. Sleep 7+ hours				
10. Regulating your nervous system				

My ONE behavior: _____

Jess's example. Jess, a made-up BCBA, is checked off on walking and strength training. Sleep is a 9 (toddler). Mindful eating is an 8 (lunch at her desk while she writes session notes). Meal timing is a 4. Hydration is a 2: she has a bottle, she just forgets it. She picks hydration. Not the most exciting choice, but the one she'll actually do this week.

Your symptoms are clues. Afternoon crash? Balanced snacks or meal timing might be your first behavior. Not hungry until you're starving? Try meal timing or eating enough.

5. Write your goal and first step

From Guided Practice 4. One long-term goal and one first step, for your one behavior.

My long-term goal
I will _____ (behavior),
how much: _____ _____ days a week,
at _____% adherence or better, by / for _____ (time frame).

Check it. ☐ Specific ☐ Measurable ☐ Attainable ☐ Relevant ☐ Time-bound

Relevant check: If this goal went well for a month, what would be different on a Tuesday afternoon?

_____

_____

My first step (something I'm confident I can hit at least 4 days a week, even on a hard week)
_____
Confidence check: How confident am I, 1 to 10? _____ If it's below 7, make the step smaller: fewer ounces, fewer days, fewer minutes.
My smallest version (the backup for the day everything falls apart):
_____
Jess's smallest version: one full bottle before lunch.

Shaping example: water

Step	Goal
Step 1: weeks 1 and 2	40 oz of water a day, 4 days a week
Step 2: weeks 3 and 4	60 oz of water a day, 5 days a week
Long-term goal: week 5 on	80 oz of water a day, 6 or more days a week, at 80% adherence or better, for 4 weeks in a row

If you hit a step easily, move up early. If you miss, stay at that step a little longer. That's not failing. That's how shaping works. Notice none of these say "every single day."

Walking: baseline about 3,000 steps, long-term goal 7,000. Step 1: a ten-minute walk after lunch, 4 days a week (about 1,000 extra steps). After two weeks, step 2 adds a second short walk, like a lap around the building before you leave work, or a walk around the block while dinner's in the oven.

Meal timing: if you usually eat at noon, step 1 might be a cheese stick and a piece of fruit by 10 a.m., 3 days a week. **Strength:** step 1 might be one 20-minute session a week, then two.

6. Strategies for change

Four strategies you already use with clients, turned on yourself. Find your one behavior below and pick ONE strategy to try for one to two weeks. If it helps, keep it and layer one more. If it doesn't, swap it. That's data, not failure.

Strategy	What it means
Environmental manipulation	Change your space so the behavior is more likely.
Decrease response effort	Make the behavior take less work.
Behavioral momentum	A quick string of small, high-probability steps before the harder one.
Self-monitoring	Track it. Recording a behavior can change the behavior.

1. Eating enough, consistently	
Environment	Keep a backup meal at work or in your therapy bag, like a tuna packet and crackers or a shelf-stable protein shake, so a packed day never becomes a zero-food day.
Response effort	Choose a default workday breakfast and lunch so there's nothing to decide.
Momentum	Unpack groceries, wash one piece of fruit, eat it right then.
Self-monitoring	For one week, put a check on a sticky note on your laptop each time you eat. Look for the gaps.
Pair it	Eat lunch somewhere you like being, like a park bench or a favorite window seat.

2. Meal timing	
Environment	Book lunch like a client: a recurring 20-minute appointment in your scheduling software so nobody books over it.
Response effort	Prep breakfast the night before so your first meal is grab-and-go. Keep a shelf-stable option, like a protein bar or a pouch of nuts, in your work bag.
Momentum	Pour your coffee, take breakfast out of the fridge, sit down. Coffee becomes the first link in the chain, not the whole meal.
Self-monitoring	For one week, write down when you woke up and when you took your first bite. That's your latency.
Pair it	Name your phone alarm something fun, like "protein o'clock."

3. Balanced meals and snacks	
Environment	Put protein at eye level in the fridge, and pre-pack snacks as protein plus carb pairs, like Greek yogurt and berries.
Response effort	Keep frozen pre-chopped vegetables and microwave rice packets on hand for a 10-minute dinner, plus your freezer dinners.
Momentum	Build your plate in order: protein first, then fiber, then carbs.
Self-monitoring	Snap a photo of your plate and count how many of the four (protein, fat, fiber, carbs) are there.
Pair it	Start a group chat with a friend where you share balanced plates.

4. Mindful eating	
Environment	Eat away from your laptop. Move to a different chair, a different room, or step outside.
Response effort	Leave your phone in your bag for the first five minutes of the meal.
Momentum	Sit down, three breaths, first bite, fork down.
Self-monitoring	Keep a three-step checklist on a sticky note (breaths, fork down, no distractions) and score the percent of steps at each meal.
Pair it	Save a calming playlist for meals only.

5. Hydration	
Environment	Put a full bottle everywhere you spend time: your desk, your therapy bag, your nightstand, next to the sink. Set it on top of your keys so you pick it up on the way out the door. Move the soda or extra coffee out of arm's reach.
Response effort	Fill your bottle the night before. Choose a one-handed lid or a straw. Add a slice of lemon if plain water feels like a chore.
Momentum	One sip when you sit down at your desk, another after your next email. Or a full glass while your coffee brews.
Self-monitoring	A tally mark on a sticky note each time you finish a bottle, or a clicker app.
Pair it	Use a bottle you love, or add berries or cucumber for a flavor you look forward to.

6. Strength training	
Environment	Keep your dumbbells or bands where you can see them, like next to the couch instead of in the closet.
Response effort	Save one 20-minute home workout on your phone, or choose a gym close to home or work.
Momentum	Put on your shoes, play one song, do five squats. Decide after that whether you keep going.
Self-monitoring	Mark an X on your calendar each session. That's your frequency.
Pair it	Make one playlist you only play when you lift.

7. Strategic cardio	
Environment	Have a moderate option ready that fits your life, like a bike ride with your kids or a dance video in the living room.
Response effort	When you're exhausted, choose the version with no setup. A brisk walk counts.
Momentum	Start with five minutes at a comfortable pace, then decide.
Self-monitoring	Rate your energy 1 to 10 before and after. If you consistently feel worse after, lower the intensity.
Pair it	Watch a favorite show only while you're on the bike or treadmill.

8. Walking	
Environment	Keep walking shoes by the door at home and a pair at work.
Response effort	Turn one phone call or supervision check-in a day into a walk-and-talk.
Momentum	Shoes on, step outside, walk five minutes. You'll often keep going.
Self-monitoring	Check your step count at the end of each day and jot it down. Look at your weekly average.
Pair it	Save a favorite podcast or playlist for walks only.

9. Sleep 7+ hours	
Environment	Put your evening lights on a timer to dim at 8:30 p.m., and charge your phone outside the bedroom.
Response effort	Set one recurring bedtime alarm so you never have to remember to set it.
Momentum	Close the laptop, plug in your phone in another room, fill a glass of water, lights out.
Self-monitoring	Write down when you got into bed and when you woke up. That's your duration.
Pair it	Save something you enjoy, like a cup of tea or a favorite blanket, for your wind-down only.

10. Regulating your nervous system	
Environment	Move a breathing app to your phone's home screen, in the spot where a social media app used to be.
Response effort	Anchor it to something you already do: after your last session, three quiet breaths before you pack up.
Momentum	Sit down, one slow breath. Then a second. Then hum on the third exhale.
Self-monitoring	Rate your stress 1 to 5 before and after. Watching the number drop is its own reinforcer.
Pair it	Do your practice while you put on pajamas.

"Pair it" means linking the behavior to something you already enjoy.

Jess's strategy. Her baseline showed her best day was the day her bottle was with her. So she bought a second bottle, kept one at her desk and one in her therapy bag, and filled both the night before (environment plus response effort). Then one piece of momentum: a glass of water while her coffee brews. She used the strategies her data pointed to, not all four.

My strategy this week: _____

7. Measure it

Pick the measure that fits the behavior, the same way you would for a client.

Behavior	Measure	How
Eating enough, balanced meals, hydration, walking, cardio	Percent adherence	Days you met your goal ÷ days planned × 100. Five of seven days is about 71%.
Mindful eating	Task analysis	Percent of the three steps completed (breaths, utensils down, no distractions). 3 of 3 = 100%. 2 of 3 = 67%.
Meal timing	Latency and interresponse time	Latency: time from waking to your first meal. Interresponse time: time between meals.
Strength training, nervous system regulation	Frequency	How many times this week?
Sleep	Duration	How many hours?

I'll measure with: _____

I'll track it on: _____

You don't need a fancy app. A sticky note, your phone's notes app, or the tracker on the back page is enough. Pick the one you'll actually see every day.

> **Jess's baseline week (goal: 80 oz).** Mon 24 oz, Tue 16, Wed 40 (she remembered her bottle), Thu 20, Fri 16, Sat 30, Sun 30. She hit 80 oz on zero of seven days: 0% adherence. That's a baseline, not a grade. And it already pointed to a strategy: her best day was the day her bottle was with her.

8. Track, review, adjust

Check your tally every one to two weeks.

If you hit your step easily for two weeks, move up to the next step. If you didn't, ask what you'd ask for any client: Is the step too big? Is something getting in the way? Then make the step smaller, or change the strategy.

We would never keep running a program that isn't working and blame the learner. Give yourself the same respect. If the data says it's not working, the plan needs to change, not you.

Review question	Weeks 1 and 2	Weeks 3 and 4
What was happening on the days it worked?		
What got in the way on the days it didn't?		
What would make the behavior easier next week?		
Next step: move up, stay, or make it smaller?		

Jess, week two: she hit her step on 3 days, one short. Three home sessions had moved her away from the clinic fridge where she refilled. Nothing about Jess changed; her environment did. So she packs a second full bottle in her therapy bag on Sunday night, and stays at step one for one more week.

9. Nervous system toolbox

Pick one and practice it at least once a day. A rep is a rep, even if it's one minute. Most breathing and meditation apps include these patterns and a guided PMR, so choose one you like and put it on your home screen. Stop any practice that makes you dizzy or uncomfortable, and check with your physician if you have a heart or lung condition.

Practice	How to do it	What research links it to
Box breathing (Guided Practice 2)	In for 4 counts, hold 4, out 4, hold 4. Repeat for 1 to 3 minutes.	Slow breathing is linked with greater relaxation and calmer heart rate patterns (Zaccaro et al., 2018).
Longer exhale	In through your nose for 4 counts, out slowly for 6. That's about six breaths a minute. 2 to 5 minutes.	Same review: slow breathing, around 6 breaths a minute, linked with relaxation and comfort (Zaccaro et al., 2018).
Cyclic sighing	Two inhales through your nose (a full breath, then a short top-up sip), then a long, slow exhale through your mouth. 5 minutes.	In a one-month study, 5 minutes a day of cyclic sighing was linked with better mood and a lower resting breathing rate (Balban et al., 2023).
Progressive muscle relaxation	See the script below. About 10 minutes, or 3 minutes for a short version.	One session of PMR increased feelings of relaxation and lowered heart rate in one study (Toussaint et al., 2021).
Humming, gargling, cold water on your face	Hum on a long exhale for a few breaths. Gargle water for 30 seconds. Splash cool water on your face.	Tools that may help some people shift gears. Research here is early, so treat these as experiments.

Progressive muscle relaxation script

Sit or lie down somewhere you won't be interrupted. For each area, tense the muscles gently (never to the point of pain) for about 5 seconds while you breathe in, then let go all at once as you breathe out. Rest for 10 to 15 seconds and notice the difference between tense and relaxed. Skip any area that's injured or sore.

1	Feet: curl your toes down.
2	Calves: pull your toes up toward your shins.
3	Thighs: press your knees together.
4	Hips and glutes: squeeze.
5	Belly: pull your belly button in.
6	Hands: make tight fists.
7	Arms: bend your elbows and tighten your upper arms.
8	Shoulders: lift them up toward your ears.
9	Face: scrunch your eyes, nose, and jaw.
10	Whole body: one gentle squeeze from head to toe, then let it all go. Take three slow breaths before you get up.

Short version (3 minutes): hands, shoulders, and face only, then three slow breaths.

10. My baseline week and tracker

From Guided Practice 6. During baseline, you're not trying to change anything. You're just watching.

My one behavior	
What I record each day	
My cue (when I'll record it)	
Baseline review date	

Examples: water = ounces or bottles. Walking = steps. Meal timing = the time you woke up and the time you first ate. Sleep = hours. Cue: the same time every day, like when you plug your phone in at night.

Week	Step / goal	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Days met	% adh.
Baseline	Just watch									
Week 1										
Week 2										
Week 3										
Week 4										
Week 5										
Week 6										

Percent adherence = days you met your goal ÷ days planned × 100.

A missed day is data, not a verdict. Pick up where you left off. No need to wait for Monday.

Next: Hormones and Burnout Part 2: The Mind. The plan covers your environment. Part 2 uses ACT to work with the thoughts and pressures that get in the way, so you can follow through on the goal you just wrote. Find it and my other CEUs by searching **Megan Patterson**. Questions? DM **CEU** on Instagram @coachmeganpatterson.

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