

# Evidence-Based Foundations of the 14 Days of Calm Workout

The 14 Days of Calm workout aims to create awareness about simple strategies to help manage feelings of mild anxiety and inspire participants to take action to implement changes. Utilising daily affirmations paired with simple actions, this workout encourages participants to notice shifts in mindset and emotional state, serving as a manageable entry point for those who may feel overwhelmed by longer commitments. Incorporating daily affirmations and gentle actions into routines can significantly impact emotional wellbeing<sup>1</sup>.



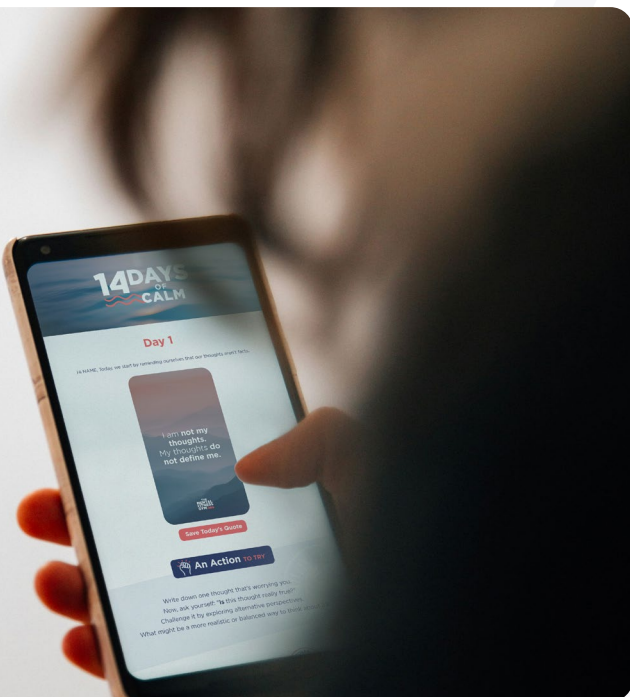
## THE SCIENCE OF MENTAL FITNESS

The Mental Fitness Gym takes an evidence-based approach to building mental fitness, equipping participants with the tools and inspiration to strengthen emotional muscles. Mental fitness refers to our capacity to cope with life's ups and downs, feel connected to others, and seek support when needed. Our approach centres on improving three proven mental health protective factors: emotional adaptability, social connectedness, and help-seeking behaviour.

Backed by research in psychology and behavioural science, the Mental Fitness Gym promotes preventative actions and habits to build mental fitness. Our research-driven approach supports people in managing mild mental health challenges while building sustainable habits for wellbeing.

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- **Management of mild anxiety and promotion of calmness:** This program employs daily affirmations and gentle actions to facilitate the reduction of mild anxiety symptoms while enhancing the participant's capacity to experience and maintain feelings of calm and emotional regulation.
- **Exploration and learning:** Participants will engage in a variety of evidence-based strategies that resonate with their unique experiences, supporting them to develop a personalised toolkit for effective mild anxiety management that aligns with their unique experiences and circumstances.
- **Connection and support:** The program fosters a sense of community and support, reinforcing the understanding that participants are not alone in their experiences.
- **Initiation of new habits:** Daily affirmations and activities promote the establishment of consistent practices that support mental wellbeing.



## OUR APPROACH

### 1. Mindfulness and self-compassion for managing anxiety

**Reference:** Self-compassion practices, including affirmations and mindfulness exercises, have been shown to reduce anxiety and foster emotional resilience. Engaging in daily affirmations can help participants become more aware of their thought patterns and reduce stress.

**Source:** *Neff, K. D., & Germer, C. K. (2013). A pilot study and randomized controlled trial of the Mindful Self-Compassion program. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 69(1), 28-44.*

**Relevance:** This study highlights the effectiveness of daily affirmations and mindfulness in reducing mild to moderate anxiety and creating emotional awareness.



### 2. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for thought-awareness and action

**Reference:** Cognitive-behavioural strategies, such as daily thought awareness and action-taking, have been proven effective in managing anxiety. This research supports the use of affirmations (changing negative thought patterns) paired with simple actions as a manageable entry point for behaviour change.

**Source:** *Hofmann, S. G., Asnaani, A., Vonk, I. J., Sawyer, A. T., & Fang, A. (2012). The efficacy of cognitive behavioral therapy: A review of meta-analyses. Cognitive Therapy and Research, 36(5), 427-440.*

**Relevance:** This review supports the effectiveness of thought-based interventions combined with small actions in reducing anxiety, especially for those starting with mild anxiety.

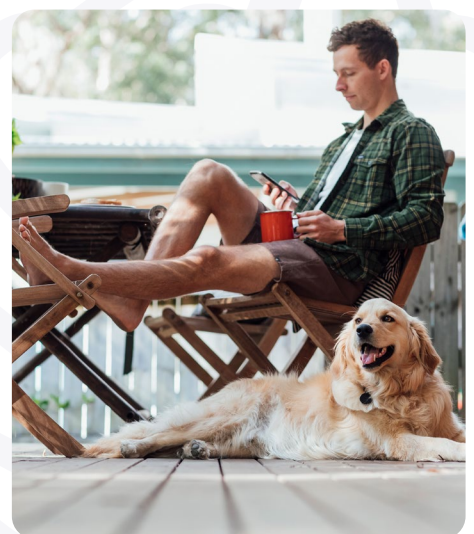


### 3. Behaviour change and habit formation

**Reference:** Creating small, manageable actions based on daily thoughts helps establish long-term habits and reduces feelings of overwhelm. This study on habit formation suggests that even short-term interventions (14 days) can kickstart lasting behavioural change.

**Source:** *Lally, P., van Jaarsveld, C. H., Potts, H. W., & Wardle, J. (2010). How are habits formed: Modelling habit formation in the real world. European Journal of Social Psychology, 40(6), 998-1009.*

**Relevance:** This study supports the use of simple, daily actions to form habits over time, making the 14-day program an effective entry point for behaviour change, especially for individuals with anxiety who may feel overwhelmed by longer commitments.



## Daily references

### Day 0

Creating small, manageable actions based on daily thoughts helps establish long-term habits and reduces feelings of overwhelm. This study on habit formation suggests that even short-term interventions (14 days) can kickstart lasting behavioural change.

*Reference: Lally, P., van Jaarsveld, C. H., Potts, H. W., & Wardle, J. (2010). How are habits formed: Modelling habit formation in the real world. European Journal of Social Psychology, 40(6), 998-1009.*

### Day 1: You are not your thoughts

This study found that cognitive therapy helps individuals separate automatic thoughts from their core self, supporting the idea that “you are not your thoughts.” By challenging distorted thinking patterns, cognitive restructuring promotes healthier emotional and behavioural responses.

*Reference: Beck, A. T. (2019). Cognitive therapy: Nature and relation to behaviour therapy. Behavior Therapy*

### Day 2: You are not alone

This research highlights that social support can buffer the effects of stress, showing that having a support network can significantly reduce feelings of isolation and promote resilience in difficult times.

*Reference: Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. Psychological Bulletin.*

### Day 3: Breathe through it

The results from this study suggest that focused breathing exercises improve emotional regulation, a key aspect of mental fitness.

*Reference: Arch, J. J., & Craske, M. G. (2006). Mechanisms of mindfulness: Emotion regulation following a focused breathing induction. Behaviour Research and Therapy, 44(12), 1849-1858”.*

### Day 4: I am safe in this moment

This study highlights the importance of emotion regulation in reducing feelings of threat or danger, emphasising that mindfulness can help people feel grounded and safe in the present moment.

*Reference: Gratz, K. L., & Roemer, L. (2004). Multidimensional assessment of emotion regulation and dysregulation. Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment.*

### Day 5: I am supported by others

This research found that social support acts as a buffer against stress, reinforcing the idea that feeling supported by others can help you cope with challenges more effectively.

*Reference: Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. Psychological Bulletin.*

### Day 6: It's OK to feel what you're feeling

This study highlights that mindfulness-based interventions encourage acceptance of emotions without judgement, promoting emotional resilience and mental well-being.

*Reference: Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context. Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice.*

### Day 7: You can manage this

This research found that developing self-efficacy - the belief in your ability to handle challenges - improves motivation and persistence when managing difficult situations.

*Reference: Bandura, A. (1997). Self-efficacy: The exercise of control. W.H. Freeman and Company.*

### Day 8: You are connected to others

This research shows that social connections provide emotional and psychological support, making individuals feel less isolated and more resilient in stressful times.

*Reference: Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. Psychological Bulletin.*

### Day 9: Choose progress over perfection

This review found that perfectionism is linked to a variety of mental health issues and that focusing on progress instead of perfection can reduce anxiety and improve wellbeing.

*Reference: Shafran, R., & Mansell, W. (2001). Perfectionism and psychopathology: A review of research and treatment. Clinical Psychology Review.*

### Day 10: You can rest without guilt

This study found that meditation and mindfulness practices can significantly reduce psychological stress, highlighting the importance of taking time to rest and recharge without feeling guilty.

*Reference: Goyal, M., et al. (2014). Meditation programs for psychological stress and well-being: A systematic review and meta-analysis. JAMA Internal Medicine.*

### Day 11: Trust the process

This research highlights that cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) is an effective approach for managing anxiety, emphasising the importance of trusting the therapeutic process to see results.

*Reference: Dugas, M. J., & Robichaud, M. (2007). Cognitive-behavioral treatment for generalized anxiety disorder. Routledge.*

### Day 12: You are strong

This study found that resilience - the ability to recover from stress or adversity - can be built over time through experiences and adaptive coping strategies, reinforcing inner strength.

*Reference: Southwick, S. M., & Charney, D. S. (2012). The science of resilience. Science.*

### Day 13

This research found that cognitive-behavioural therapy is highly effective at helping individuals manage and reframe their thoughts, improving emotional well-being.

*Reference: Hofmann, S. G., et al. (2012). The efficacy of cognitive behavioral therapy: A review of meta-analyses. Cognitive Therapy and Research.*

### Day 14

This research highlights that feeling supported by others reduces stress and fosters a sense of security, reminding individuals that they are not alone in their experiences.

*Reference: Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. Psychological Bulletin.*



**[thementalfitnessgym.org](https://thementalfitnessgym.org)**

## **Disclaimer**

The information in our Mental Fitness Gym Workouts is not intended as a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Gotcha4Life does not provide counselling or crisis support services. You can connect with mental health professionals for confidential 1-on-1 support and advice by calling Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636 at any time or visit [beyondblue.org.au](https://beyondblue.org.au). If someone you care about is experiencing emotional distress, please contact Lifeline who are there to listen and support you, 24 hours a day on 13 11 14. If someone's life is in danger, call 000.

For additional information and detailed references, please refer to the full articles and studies.