

A FREE GUIDE · 5 PRACTICES · UNDER 2 MINUTES EACH

FIND YOUR STILL POINT

Five ballet practices for when your mind won't stop spinning. Each one takes under 2 minutes.

START HERE

IT'S 11PM, AND YOUR MIND IS DOING 32 FOUETTÉS

The laundry is still in the machine. Tomorrow is already loud. Your body is lying still, and your brain is spinning like it has a solo to finish.

From the outside, nobody would guess. You show up. You deliver. You hold it all together. You can be high-functioning and quietly burning out at the same time.

Here's what ballet knows: a dancer doesn't stop the spin by gripping harder. She picks one still point and comes back to it on every turn. That return is trained. Yours can be too.

This guide gives you five still points you can carry anywhere: in the studio, at work, in your business and at home.

You don't need to have danced a step for any of this to work.

THE GUIDE IN 60 SECONDS

WHAT IS IT?	Five small practices from ballet class: spotting, breath at the barre, finding center, plié grounding and counting yourself in. Each takes under 2 minutes. No mat, no music, no leotard.
HOW DOES IT HELP NOW?	Each one gives your mind one steady place to land, right when the spin starts.
HOW DOES IT HELP LATER?	Practiced often, a small move starts to happen on its own, the way barre becomes second nature.
WHY TRUST IT?	Each practice pairs real ballet craft with published research, cited simply at the end so you can check it. Where no study backs a practice, the guide says so.
ONE NEXT STEP	Get the free Ballerina Hustler newsletter on Substack: one practice like these every Tuesday.

WHY A STILL POINT WORKS

Watch a ballerina turn. Her body spins, but her head snaps back to the same spot on every rotation. That's called **spotting**. It gives her eyes one steady reference each time she comes around, so the room stops smearing.

Researchers at Imperial College London spun 29 ballet dancers and 20 rowers in a chair in a dark room. The dancers' sense of spinning faded faster, and it no longer tracked their eye reflexes the way it did in the rowers. Brain scans showed that a part of the cerebellum that handles signals from the inner ear was smaller in the dancers, and smaller still in the most experienced ones (Nigmatullina et al., 2013).

That study is about dizziness, not worry. But it makes the one point that matters here: **steadiness is trained, not born**. Brains adapt with practice. Yours included.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

- Read it once, all the way through. It takes about 10 minutes.
- Pick one practice. Just one. Use it for a week.
- Tie it to something you already do every day: standing up from a chair, the kettle, the car door.
- Expect wobbles. In class, nobody lands every turn. Come back to the spot and go again.

THE PRACTICES

THE FIVE STILL POINTS

1 SPOT IT

BALLET CRAFT: SPOTTING • TIME: ABOUT 60 SECONDS

On a turn, a dancer picks one point and her eyes keep coming home to it. Off the stage, no spinning needed. The spot simply gives your attention a home.

- 1 Choose one fixed point at eye level: a doorframe, a window latch, a mug.
- 2 Rest your eyes on it. A soft gaze, not a stare. Breathe normally.
- 3 When a thought pulls you away, notice it, then bring your eyes back to the spot. That return is the rep.
- 4 Stay for about 10 slow breaths.

Why it works: This is the craft behind the Imperial study above. The research shows dancers' brains learning to stay steady in a spin. The practice borrows the idea: one steady reference, found again and again.

WHEN TO USE IT

IN THE STUDIO:

before a turn, or when you've lost the combination and feel every eye in the room on you.

AT WORK:

in the minute before you walk into a hard meeting or an interview.

IN YOUR BUSINESS:

right before a sales call, or the moment after a client says no.

AT HOME:

at 11pm, when the to-do list starts its own solo.

2 BARRE BREATH

BALLET CRAFT: BREATH AT THE BARRE • TIME: ABOUT 90 SECONDS

Good teachers say it all through barre: breathe. Dancers learn to let the exhale carry a movement down, so the body can soften without collapsing. This practice, called a cyclic sigh, makes the exhale the star.

- 1 Stand or sit tall. Rest one hand on a counter, a chair back or your chest.
- 2 Breathe in through your nose. Then take a second, shorter sip of air on top.
- 3 Let it all go in a long, slow exhale through your mouth, longer than the inhale.
- 4 Repeat 5 or 6 times at an easy pace. If you feel light-headed, stop and breathe normally.

Why it works: In a month-long study from Stanford Medicine, 108 people did 5 minutes a day of breathwork or mindfulness meditation. Cyclic sighing gave the biggest daily lift in positive mood, and it lowered people's daily breathing rate, tracked by a wrist wearable, more than meditation did (Balban et al., 2023). The study used 5 minutes a day. This is a shorter taste of it. If you like it, stretch it toward 5 minutes on a calm day.

WHEN TO USE IT

IN THE STUDIO:
between combinations at the barre, or at the side of the room before your group goes across the floor.

AT WORK:
after a tense conversation, before you respond.

IN YOUR BUSINESS:
right before you say your price out loud.

AT HOME:
in the car before you walk in the door, or lying in bed when sleep won't come.

3 FIND YOUR CENTER

BALLET CRAFT: FINDING CENTER, "PULL UP" • TIME: ABOUT 60 SECONDS

Teachers say it a hundred times a class: pull up. It doesn't mean suck in. It means lifting from your center so everything else can move freely. Center isn't a place you hold. It's a place you come back to.

- 1 Stand with your feet under your hips, or sit with both feet flat on the floor.
- 2 Feel your weight spread through both feet: heel, big toe, little toe.
- 3 Grow tall through the crown of your head, as if a string lifts you. Let your shoulders slide down, away from your ears.
- 4 Rest one hand just below your belly button. Take one long exhale and feel your center under your hand.
- 5 Stay for 3 slow breaths. Then move.

Why it works: This one is pure ballet craft. It's the first thing a teacher fixes, and it's how dancers carry a lot without all of it landing on their knees. No study is cited for this practice.

WHEN TO USE IT

IN THE STUDIO:
before center work, when there's no barre to hold.

AT WORK:
before you stand up to speak, or when you're asked a question you didn't prepare for.

IN YOUR BUSINESS:
before a pitch, a negotiation or a conversation about money.

AT HOME:
every time you stand up from a chair. Pull up for one breath before you walk away.

4 PLIÉ TO GROUND

BALLET CRAFT: DEMI-PLIÉ • TIME: ABOUT 90 SECONDS

Every barre starts with pliés for a reason. They warm you up, and they put you back in touch with the floor. A demi-plié is a small, soft bend of the knees with your heels down. It's the opposite of bracing.

- 1 Stand with one hand light on a counter, a chair back or a sturdy windowsill. Heels together and toes turned out a little in a small V, or feet parallel if that feels better.
- 2 Bend your knees softly over your toes for 4 slow counts, breathing out. Keep your heels down and your spine long.
- 3 Straighten for 4 counts, breathing in, as if you're pressing the floor away.
- 4 Do 4 of them. Then stand still and feel your feet.

Keep it small, knees over toes, never rolling inward. Sore knees or hips? Skip the bend and sit instead: press both feet into the floor for 4 counts, then release for 4.

Why it works: Ballet craft again. Pliés prepare every jump and cushion every landing, and grounding before a big moment borrows the same idea. No study is cited for this practice.

WHEN TO USE IT

IN THE STUDIO:

at the start of class, when your head is still somewhere else.

AT WORK:

in a quiet stairwell before a presentation, or the seated version during a long meeting.

IN YOUR BUSINESS:

before you walk into a pitch or onto a stage.

AT HOME:

at the kitchen counter while the kettle boils and the house is loud.

5 COUNT YOURSELF IN

BALLET CRAFT: COUNTING THE MUSIC, "5, 6, 7, 8" • TIME: ABOUT 30 SECONDS

Before a combination, the teacher counts you in. A count turns a blur of music into something you can step into. Naming a feeling does the same for a blur of thoughts.

- 1 Pause and plant your feet.
- 2 Finish this sentence in a word or two: "Right now I feel..." Worried. Overloaded. Dreading Thursday. Short and plain is enough.
- 3 Say it quietly, or write it on a scrap of paper.
- 4 Take one breath, count yourself in, "5, 6, 7, 8," and step into the next thing.

Why it works: In a brain-scan study at UCLA, putting a feeling into words lowered activity in the amygdala, the brain's alarm center, compared with other ways of processing the same upsetting images. It also switched on a region at the front of the brain that helps regulate emotion (Lieberman et al., 2007).

Hiding a feeling doesn't switch it off, either. People who hid their disgust felt it just as strongly. Their hearts actually slowed, but other stress signals rose, such as sweatier skin and tighter blood vessels in the fingers: the stress system was still working in the background (Gross & Levenson, 1993). So don't hide it, and don't fix it. Name it, then count yourself in.

WHEN TO USE IT

IN THE STUDIO:

when you miss a step and the "everyone saw that" voice starts.

AT WORK:

when feedback stings and you need a second before you answer.

IN YOUR BUSINESS:

when a launch goes quiet or a big no lands.

AT HOME:

before a hard conversation, or right after you snap and want a reset.

PUT IT TOGETHER: YOUR 2-MINUTE STILL POINT

When you only have two minutes, string three of the practices together:

SPOT

About 30 seconds. Find one fixed point and rest your eyes on it.

SIGH

About 60 seconds. 3 or 4 cyclic sighs: two sips in, one long exhale out.

COUNT IN

About 30 seconds. "Right now I feel..." in a word or two. Then 5, 6, 7, 8, and go.

Think of it as the small routine a dancer runs in the wings. Researchers have studied routines like this in sport: across 112 results, pre-performance routines improved performance, including under pressure, whatever the type of routine or the athlete's skill level (Rupprecht et al., 2021). That's sport, not dance, and it's about performing, not about calm. But the lesson carries over: a small routine you trust gives you somewhere to start.

NOW, AND LATER

Now: each practice gives your mind one steady place to land, in under 2 minutes.

Later: repetition does the rest. In a 12-week study, new daily habits took a median of 66 days to feel automatic, with a range of 18 to 254 days, and missing one day didn't derail it (Lally et al., 2010). That's what barre is: the same pliés, class after class, until your body knows them by heart.

YOUR WEEK AT THE BARRE

MY STILL POINT THIS WEEK: _____

WHEN I'LL DO IT (MY CUE): _____

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN

Tick a box each day you try it. Missed a day? Keep going. No streaks, no guilt.

A FEW SENSIBLE NOTES

- This guide is education, not medical advice. It doesn't diagnose, treat or cure anything.
- Move gently and stay within what feels comfortable. Stop if anything hurts, or if you feel dizzy or light-headed, and go back to normal breathing.
- If you're pregnant, recovering from an injury, or living with a heart, lung, balance or joint condition, check with your doctor or physical therapist before trying new movement or breathing practices.
- If your mind is spinning so much that getting through the day is a struggle, please talk with your doctor or a licensed therapist. If you're in crisis in the US, call or text 988. Elsewhere, contact your local emergency number.

WHY TRUST THIS GUIDE

Ballerina Hustler pairs two things: the craft ballet teachers have passed down for generations, and published research you can check for yourself. Every study below was checked against its published paper or abstract before it went into this guide. Where the research doesn't cover a practice, the guide says so.

- **Spotting and trained steadiness:** Nigmatullina Y, Hellyer PJ, Nachev P, Sharp DJ, Seemungal BM. *Cerebral Cortex*, 2015 (online 2013). Imperial College London. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cercor/bht266>
- **Cyclic sighing:** Balban MY, et al. *Cell Reports Medicine*, 2023. Stanford Medicine. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.xcrm.2022.100895>
- **Naming a feeling:** Lieberman MD, et al. *Psychological Science*, 2007. UCLA. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2007.01916.x>
- **Hiding a feeling:** Gross JJ, Levenson RW. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1993. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.64.6.970>
- **Routines under pressure (sport):** Rupprecht AGO, Tran US, Gröpel P. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 2021 (issue dated 2024). <https://doi.org/10.1080/1750984X.2021.1944271>
- **Building a habit:** Lally P, van Jaarsveld CHM, Potts HWW, Wardle J. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 2010. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.674>

YOUR NEXT STEP: ONE STILL POINT EVERY TUESDAY

If this helped, there's more where it came from. The Ballerina Hustler newsletter is free and arrives every Tuesday on Substack. Each issue gives you one ballet-inspired practice you can use the same day, the science behind it with the study linked, and a warm reminder that you belong at the barre, whether you danced at eight, dance now or have always wanted to.

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With love from the barre,
The Ballerina Hustler team

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