

The Pre-Room Routine

90 seconds before you open the door

The body leads. The feeling follows.

WHY THIS EXISTS

Your best state doesn't arrive on time by accident. Walk in cold, and your first five minutes run on an unprepared nervous system – flat, scrambled, or both. This routine is how you arrive on purpose. Actors run a version of it before every performance. It works for any room: the interview, the pitch, the hard conversation, the first date.

THE ROUTINE – FOUR MOVES, 90 SECONDS

- 1 Breathe** ~ 40 SECONDS
One full breath in through the nose – then a second, short, sharp top-up, no exhale in between. Then a long, slow exhale through the mouth. Two or three rounds. The fastest lever you have on your nervous system – it tells your body the emergency is over. Not relaxation homework. A gear change.
- 2 Anchor** ~ 10 SECONDS
One physical action that isn't thinking – feeling your feet on the floor, rolling the shoulders, tapping thumb to finger. Pressure lives in the head; the anchor grounds your attention in the body.
- 3 Word** ~ 10 SECONDS
One word to walk in with. Not a speech to yourself. A single word – something like steady, open, serve. Or your own. Actors do this constantly: one word replaces a dozen instructions.
- 4 Move** ~ 30 SECONDS
Take your word with you, and decide your first move – something like a steady stride, an easy smile, or the way you say your first line. Owning the first 30 seconds is the cheapest confidence you'll ever buy.

HOW TO RUN IT

- **90 seconds, every room, no exceptions.** The routine only becomes automatic when it stops being a decision.
- **The same way, every time.** A fixed sequence is what makes it hold under pressure.
- **If the room feels too big today: shrink it.** Build the evidence in a slightly easier space first. The rep stays honest: you actually did the thing, and you actually survived it.

BUILD YOUR OWN - FILL IN ONCE, REUSE FOREVER

My anchor: _____

My cue word: _____

My first move: _____

THE SCIENCE, BRIEFLY

- Cyclic sighing: a double inhale and long exhale outperformed other breathing practices for mood and lowering physiological arousal (Balban et al., 2023, Cell Reports Medicine 4(1)).
- Pre-performance routines stabilise arousal, aim attention at the task, and lift self-belief (Cotterill, 2010; Rupprecht et al., 2024 meta-analysis, International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology).
- If-then plans carry you through the moments where willpower runs out (Gollwitzer, 1999, American Psychologist 54(7)).

Now.

Go be a human.