

The 10 Minute Burnout Reset

A fast, effective exercise to break mental overload using therapeutic photography.

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When your mind won't switch off

This method brings together my 15 years as a therapist and my experience in street photography.

If you're approaching burnout, you might notice the following:

- difficulty switching off even when resting
- feeling disconnected from things that used to matter
- exhaustion that sleep doesn't fix

Burnout is often an attention problem. Shifting attention through photography helps quiet the mind's default-mode network, linked to mental overload. According to a recent systematic review, understanding how attention functions can help

interrupt cycles of burnout in psychological therapists. When engaging in photography, three important psychological processes are naturally set in motion. (Wong et al., 2019, pp. 321-328)

- Attention Reset. According to *The Handbook of Phototherapy and Therapeutic Photography* by Del Loewenthal, actively searching for images can help interrupt cycles of rumination; for example, noticing a simple object like a crumpled coffee cup during daily life can prompt reflection and awareness of personal emotions, such as feeling pressure. That single moment of noticing helped them shift out of autopilot and brought their mind back to the present.
- Externalisation — Your emotions become easier to understand when you see them outside yourself.
- Perspective Shift — Changing what you see often changes how you feel.

The 10 Minute Reset Exercise

Walk. Carry your phone camera.

If you need to stay indoors or have limited mobility, you can do this exercise at home. Move through your living space and pay attention to what catches your eye—objects, light, colors, or textures. If walking or moving around is difficult, try sitting by a window or in a quiet spot, and notice details around you from where you are. The key is to engage your attention and look for small things that resonate with you, wherever you are.

As you walk, pay attention to what catches your eye.

- Look for and photograph one thing that represents pressure to you.
- Find and photograph something that feels like relief to you.
- Photograph an object or scene that sparks your curiosity.



Reflection

After your walk, look at your photos and ask yourself: Which image felt easiest to take?

- Which one reflects how you feel today?
- Did anything surprise you?

Keep in mind, your aim isn't artistic quality. It's awareness. Simply noticing what arises is enough. If you feel moved, you can choose to take one small action—perhaps a single commitment inspired by the photo that surprised you. But remember, taking action is optional. Sometimes acknowledging how you feel or what you notice is the most meaningful step. Allow yourself the space to reflect without pressure.



To deepen your practice, access the complete therapeutic photography workbook for further exercises and guidance.

This exercise comes from a longer reflective workbook exploring four pathways:

- Container & Contained
- Distance & Detail
- Light & Shadow
- Movement & Stillness

Download the full workbook now to start your extended journey with therapeutic photography.



Explore more exercises at billysmiththerapy.uk and access detailed guides and resources now. All exercises and prompts are designed to be fully private and self-guided, so you can reflect and participate at your own pace without sharing your personal material with anyone. Your process is yours alone.

Sign up at billysmiththerapy.uk to receive reflective prompts, workshop updates, and future resources.



References

Watkins, J. (2024). Alleviating digital fatigue through embodied artistic practice and green space. *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media* 20(3), pp. 527-542. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14794713.2024.2305448>

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