



Tiny Habits

Big Magic!

**A Companion Booklet
to Episode 4
of
THE KAREN SCHAAL
PODCAST**

**Created by Karen Schaal
A Science and Gratitude Approach
Powered by People Owned Psychology™**



Welcome!

This booklet is part of the Brilliance Series, a five-part collection accompanying Episodes 1–5 of The Karen Schaal Podcast.

Each booklet is designed to help you reconnect with your innate brilliance, not through inspiration alone, but through tools rooted in biology, psychology, and gratitude-based science.

In this edition, we explore the quiet power of tiny habits. These small, consistent actions may seem simple, but they reshape the brain, strengthen identity, and create momentum where motivation fades.

These practices are yours to explore at your own pace. Because big change doesn't start big.

Let it begin.
This is how change takes root.



Tiny Habits - Big Magic!

Change doesn't always begin with a breakthrough. Often, it starts with something small, a breath, a shift, or a simple choice made on purpose.

Tiny habits might not look like much in the moment, but repeated over time, they shape how you think, how you feel, and how you move through the world.

This booklet explores how small, consistent actions rooted in daily life can create real momentum. When the steps are small, you're more likely to take them. And that's where the magic begins.

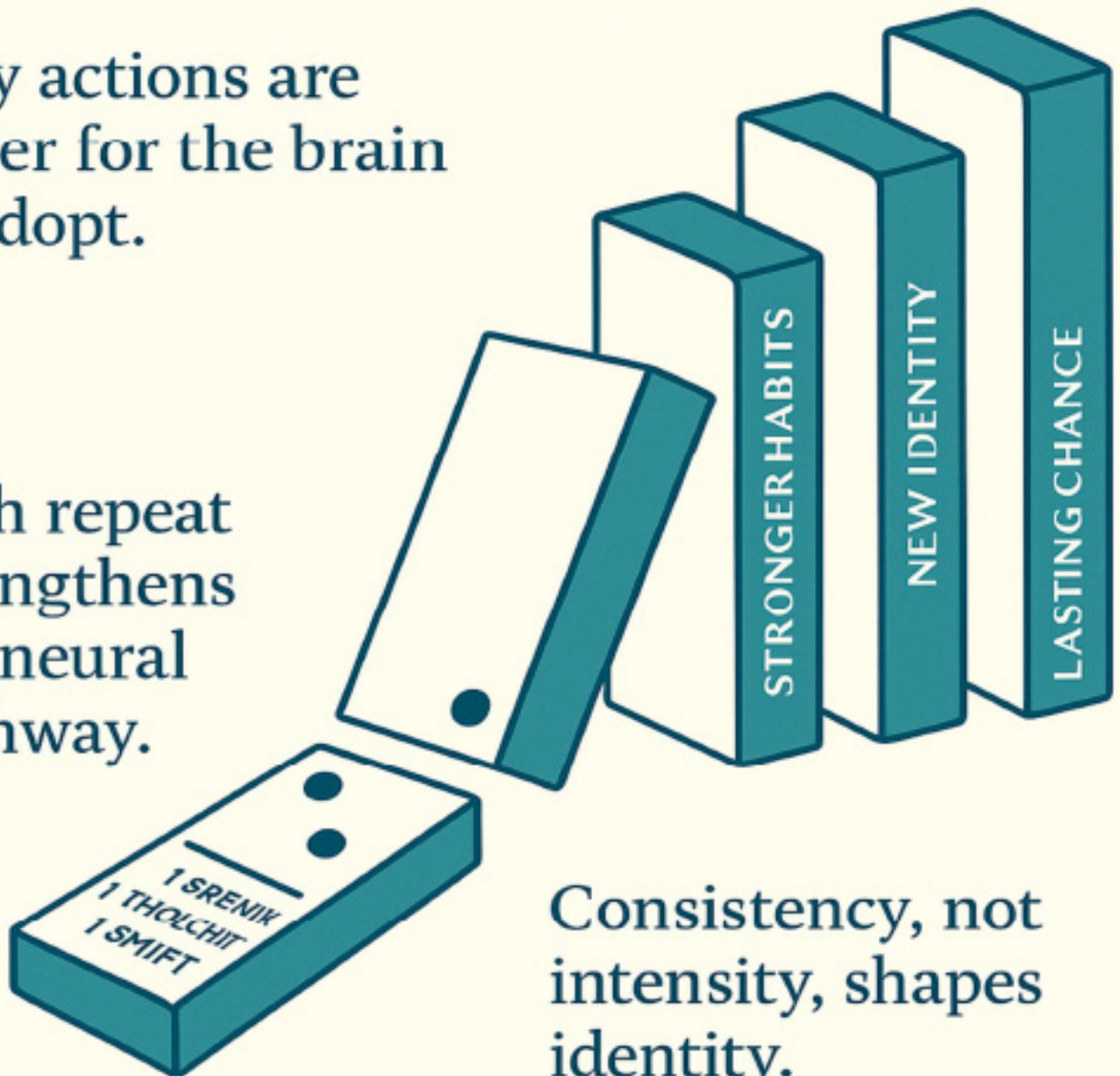
The following infographic shows how even the tiniest behaviors can make a lasting impact when built into your everyday rhythm, by engaging the brain's natural wiring and reshaping how you think, respond, and show up in the world.

DID YOU KNOW?

Small choices rewire your brain.

Tiny actions are easier for the brain to adopt.

Each repeat strengthens the neural pathway.



Consistency, not intensity, shapes identity.

Body signals

Tension, irritability, and brain fog are signs your system needs a break.

Reconnecting with Your Brilliance

These practices are designed to help you reconnect with yourself. You'll find them throughout the Brilliance Series, and you can incorporate them into your routine in ways that feel natural.

Use them one at a time, or combine them as they resonate with you. Let them evolve with you. Let them remind you of your brilliance.

1

Breathe

A Moment
of Noticing



2

Move

Awareness
in Action



3

Reflect

A Quiet
Discovery



4

Observe

Intelligence
in the Environment



5

Appreciate

Gratitude
as Connection



Breathe



Choose one moment in your day when you're about to start something new - like opening your laptop, leaving the house, or beginning a conversation.

Before you begin, take one slow, intentional breath. Let it be a simple pause between what was and what comes next.

No need to fix anything. Just notice the shift.

That breath becomes a signal — a small doorway between parts of your day.

When repeated, it helps you enter the next moment with more calm and awareness.

One breath, every transition. Let that be your practice.

Move



Choose one place in your day where you already walk, from your car to the door, down the hallway, or around the block.

Turn that walk into a tiny habit. Slow down just slightly. Feel your feet on the ground. Let your arms swing. No need to go far or fast. This isn't about counting steps, it's about noticing them.

Let your body lead, if only for a minute.

With practice, this small moment of movement becomes a reset - for your mood, your energy, your focus.

Walk with awareness. Do it daily.

Expanding the Mind and Growing the Heart

Reflect



Pick a natural pause point in your day - like finishing a task, eating a meal, or getting into bed.

Use that moment to ask yourself one simple question:
“What’s one good thing that happened today?”

It might be something small, a kind word or a solved problem. You’re not looking for anything major. You’re building the habit of noticing.

When practiced daily, this short reflection strengthens optimism, focus, and emotional clarity.

Tiny questions create big shifts, not overnight, but over time. They redirect your attention, rewire your focus, and train your mind to notice what matters.

End your day with a thought that lifts you.

Observe



Choose one small part of your day to look outward - while waiting in line, walking the dog, or sitting at a red light.

Look for the familiar - a bird settling in the trees, leaves moving in the breeze, someone sweeping a sidewalk.

Notice the rhythm in the world, the quiet actions happening again and again. The world is full of tiny habits. These small patterns hold wisdom.

Change doesn't shout. It shows up softly through repetition.

Let the world's rhythm remind you of your own.

Appreciate



Pick one everyday moment such as pouring your morning drink. Each time it happens, pause long enough to say a quiet “thank you” for the fact that you are acting with purpose.

Tiny habits don’t just move your life forward. They signal something deeper - that you’re making choices toward goodness, even when no one is watching.

It’s about noticing alignment. Savoring the moment. Recognizing your quiet participation in something meaningful.

Inserting appreciation into small actions is a way of honoring what’s working and being grateful for the little things that are shaping who you are

Why These Practices Work

The practices in this booklet are rooted in evidence based research. Science continues to confirm that the five areas of focus in this booklet:

- intentional breath
- movement
- reflection
- observation
- appreciation

can support emotional regulation, cognitive clarity, physical healing, and deeper connection.

Small actions, repeated consistently, have the power to rewire the brain, anchor new patterns, and reshape behavior.

The following pages offer a deeper look at what is occurring in your body and mind during each of the recommended practices.

Each practice is paired with a relevant research study, offering deeper insight into how and why these simple exercises can create meaningful shifts in your self-awareness, enhance your well-being, and influence how you see and relate to the world around you.

Why These Practices Work

1. Breathe - Calm through repetition.

Tiny shifts in your breath can create powerful changes in your nervous system. When practiced consistently, even for just one minute, intentional breathing activates the parasympathetic response: lowering stress, stabilizing heart rate, and helping you feel grounded.

But breath does more than calm the body. It also interrupts mental spirals, slows racing thoughts, and allows you to redirect your attention when you feel overwhelmed. This makes it not just a calming tool, but a strategic one.

A tiny breath habit doesn't require stillness or a special setting. It just needs consistency. Over time, it retrains your stress response and helps you respond, not react.

It's a tool you can use anytime to steady your mind, shift your state, or create a pause when you need one.

Research

Fincham, G. W., Strauss, C., Montero-Marin, J., & Cavanagh, K. (2023). Effect of breathwork on stress and mental health: A meta-analysis of randomised-controlled trials. *Scientific reports*, 13(1), 432. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-27247-y>

Why These Practices Work

2. Move - Momentum in motion.

Movement doesn't have to be intense or time-consuming to be effective. Even small, repeated physical actions, like shoulder rolls, stretching, or walking with intention activate the brain, increase circulation, and release physical tension. These micro-movements also support mental clarity by helping shift your focus and state.

When you link movement to something you already do, such as brushing your teeth, waiting for your coffee, or standing in line, it becomes a habit that fits naturally into your day. And when done consistently, it builds momentum.

Small actions signal to the brain that you're capable, engaged, and moving forward - literally and psychologically.

Tiny movement, repeated often, creates a pattern of energy and agency your brain begins to trust.

Research

VAlbulescu, P., Macsinga, I., Rusu, A., Sulea, C., Bodnaru, A., & Tulbure, B. T. (2022). "Give me a break!" A systematic review and meta-analysis on the efficacy of micro-breaks for increasing well-being and performance. *PloS one*, 17(8), e0272460. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0272460>

Why These Practices Work

3. Reflect - Insight through action.

Small moments of reflection create measurable shifts in how your brain processes experience. When you pause to notice what worked, how you felt, or what you learned, you're strengthening key cognitive and emotional functions.

Even brief, consistent reflection like asking a simple question at the end of the day builds mental clarity, emotional insight, and pattern recognition. Over time, this improves self-regulation and reduces automatic reactivity.

Science shows that intentional self-reflection activates areas of the brain involved in problem-solving, memory, and future planning. The more often you reflect, the easier it becomes to respond with intention rather than impulse. Tiny questions repeated daily create powerful cognitive loops, shaping how you learn, decide, and grow.

Research

He, W., & Gan, J. (2025). The relationship between self-reflection and mental health: A meta-analysis review. *Current Psychology: A Journal for Diverse Perspectives on Diverse Psychological Issues*. Advance online publication

. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-025-07415-9>

Why These Practices Work

4. Observe - Awareness through attention.

Observation is a quiet but powerful habit. When you regularly pause to notice small patterns in your environment your brain begins to sharpen its attention and shift away from autopilot.

These moments of noticing train your mind to engage with the present moment rather than rush past it. Even 30 seconds of intentional observation can reduce mental clutter, lower stress, and support cognitive focus.

Linking observation to something you already do, like walking to your car or washing dishes, makes the habit sustainable.

Over time, this practice rewires your attention system to favor awareness over distraction.

Tiny observations repeated often, develop personal awareness and rebuild clarity.

Research

Yakobi, Ofir & smilek, daniel & Danckert, James. (2021). The Effects of Mindfulness Meditation on Attention, Executive Control and Working Memory in Healthy Adults: A Meta-analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*. 45. [10.1007/s10608-020-10177-2](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10608-020-10177-2).

Why These Practices Work

5. Appreciate - Identity through gratitude.

Small expressions of gratitude have measurable effects on your brain. Repeated moments of appreciation increase activity in regions linked to emotion regulation, reward, and perspective-taking, including the prefrontal cortex.

This isn't about grand gestures. It's about recognizing and reinforcing what's working. When tied to an everyday action, like flipping a switch or locking a door, gratitude becomes a habit your brain begins to expect.

Over time, these micro-moments of thanks help reduce stress, improve emotional balance, and shift attention toward positive cues in your environment.

Tiny habits of appreciation don't just feel good. They train your mind to notice what matters and to carry that awareness forward.

Research

Cunha, L. F., Pellanda, L. C., & Reppold, C. T. (2019). Positive Psychology and Gratitude Interventions: A Randomized Clinical Trial. *Frontiers in psychology*, 10, 584.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00584>

Congratulations!

If you've made it here,
you've done more than just read.
You showed up — not once,
but again and again.

You paused.
You noticed.
You made space for something small,
and chose to treat it like it mattered.

In a world that waits for big change,
you chose repetition.
You chose presence.
You chose the next right step.

Whether this is your first habit
or part of a practice you've long nurtured,
thank you for walking this path with me.

Keep doing what works.
Keep showing up gently.
Tiny habits aren't small at all —
they're how you build strength, stability, and a meaningful life.

Stay Connected

Listen to The Karen Schaal Podcast

Spotify – The Karen Schaal Podcast

YouTube – @karenschaal

Explore More

www.karenschaal.com

Find tools, companion booklets, and new resources added regularly.

Say Hello

karen@karenschaal.com

Follow Along

Instagram: @karenschaal

Facebook Page: People Owned Psychology

Facebook Group: Gratitude Works

TikTok: @gratitude.gal

X (Twitter): @KarenSchaal

About the Author

Karen Schaal is the founder of People Owned Psychology™, a science- and gratitude-based platform devoted to expanding the mind and growing the heart. Her approach helps people embrace their personal brilliance by developing awareness - of themselves and the psychological processes that shape our experience. Karen believes that when we make intentional choices toward goodness, by seeking out the good in ourselves, in others, and in the world, we grow into the fullness of who we were meant to be.