

Spark

by John J. Ratey

A printable to-do list of the most effective habits from this book. Check one off each day you do it.

MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT SUN

- ⁰¹ **Install a 20-minute pre-work cognitive primer**

Before your most important thinking block, do 20 minutes of brisk movement. Protect this as a non-negotiable mental performance ritual.

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- ⁰² **Schedule a weekly 150-minute movement floor**

Block your calendar with the minimum effective dose: 150 minutes total cardio split across 4-5 sessions, then build upward only if sustainable.

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- ⁰³ **Pair study sessions with movement**

Use 10-20 minutes of movement before learning blocks and a short walk after to improve encoding and recall.

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- ⁰⁴ **Add two strength sessions for resilience**

Train major movement patterns twice weekly. Strength work improves stress tolerance and supports long-term brain aging outcomes.

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- ⁰⁵ **Use an emergency anti-stress protocol**

On high-pressure days: 10-minute fast walk, 2 minutes of nasal breathing cooldown, then start your hardest task immediately.

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- ⁰⁶ **Track the brain effects, not just calories**

After each workout, rate focus, mood, and stress from 1-10. Keep the routines that improve cognition, not only body metrics.