

The art of cosy

Learn how to live your best cosy life by bringing more warmth, comfort and meaning to your everyday

Words: Emma Green

Cosiness has experienced something of a resurgence in recent years. With the Danish concept of hygge entering the popular vernacular in the mid-2010s, the Covid-19 pandemic forcing many of us to stay home and reassess our lives, and social media embracing slow-living lifestyles, cosiness has never been more relevant. Some may argue that it is an understandable reaction (and antidote) to a culture that promotes constant grind, busyness and never-ending productivity.

Cosiness is less about a specific aesthetic trend and more about a feeling: that of tranquillity, presence and contentment. It's about creating a life that invites you to slow down, reconnect with yourself and find pleasure in the simple, often-overlooked moments. This can be done by incorporating particular rituals into your routine. Unlike habits, though, rituals prioritise experience over efficiency.

"A cosy ritual is a gentle, intentional act you return to with care," says Dr Tracy King, clinical psychologist, yoga teacher and shamanic practitioner. "Unlike a habit, a ritual carries meaning. You don't rush through it."

Cosy living can be a powerful form of self-regulation and emotional care. Modern life can keep us in a near-constant state of activation through screens, noise, deadlines and social pressure that all signal urgency. Cosy environments and rituals, however, help us to decompress. Warm lighting, soft textures, familiar smells, gentle sounds and predictable routines all signal

safety to the brain. This then activates the parasympathetic nervous system, slowing the heart rate, lowering cortisol and allowing muscles to relax.

"These rituals act like moments of self-parenting, echoing the way a caregiver soothes a child through consistency and warmth," says Dr King.

At their core, rituals offer familiarity and comfort – two things that the nervous system responds to deeply. They act as anchors, reminding us that there are parts of the day that are predictable and safe, such as that faithful morning cup of coffee. This is especially important during periods of stress, transition or uncertainty, when external stability may be limited.

This feature looks at practical ways for you to start adding some much-needed cosiness to your life.

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Cosy reflection exercise

Where could you do with a bit more cosiness in your own life? The following prompts will help you to address this:

- What moments in my day feel rushed, overwhelming or disconnected?
- What small comfort could make the moment softer?
- Where could I add comfort, beauty or calm to my life or home?
- What small things already bring me peace?
- What routine could I repeat to create calm?

"It can also help to remember earlier experiences of comfort," says Dr King. "What supported you during difficult times? Where do you push through when rest or gentleness might be needed instead?"

Creating a cosy habitat

Your home should reflect how you want to feel; ideally, it should feel safe, familiar and restorative, and somewhere you can exhale once you walk through the front door. A cosy home focuses on comfort over perfection and is designed to be lived in, not just admired.

It should also prioritise simplicity. By reducing clutter, keeping surfaces relatively clear and ensuring all items have a place, your home can feel calmer and less overwhelming. Just as importantly, it should be a space that evokes personal meaning. A home that reflects who you are will feel more comforting than one designed purely for aesthetics. Objects that tell a story – favourite books and trinkets, handmade objects, photographs or artwork – are what establish emotional warmth. And cosiness is deeply sensory – sensory input has a direct line to the emotional brain and can affect how we feel.

“A warm home is created through the senses, not just through rearranging objects,” says Dr King. “Soft, low lighting helps the body relax, while bright light keeps the nervous system alert.” Overhead lights can feel harsh, especially in the evening, so using lamps, candles or wall lights can create a more subdued ambience. You can also try pairing this with gentle background noise, such as a crackling fire or rain sounds, to enhance this feeling of calmness.

“Smell has a particularly strong effect on the emotional brain,” continues Dr King. “Earthy scents such as

wood, moss, herbs or spices can create a sense of safety without conscious effort. Bringing similar scents into your home can remind the body of calm, natural environments.” Other scents like vanilla or fresh linen can also evoke safety and nostalgia.

Another sense to consider when choosing accessories is that of touch, so fill your space with calming textures. “Natural materials like wood, cotton, wool or stone feel grounding because they’re familiar and comforting,” explains Dr King. Layering soft fabrics, cushions and throws can also help to make a space feel welcoming and lived-in.

“Physical warmth is just as important,” says Dr King. “When the body is warm, muscles soften and stress eases.” There is a well-established psychological link between physical warmth and emotional warmth. This connection is thought to originate in early childhood, when warmth is associated with care, safety and attachment. Alongside a warm home, cosy rituals like hot drinks, blankets and baths can also tap into this association.

Cosiness isn’t necessarily something you can buy, but the items in the circles on this page can help towards cultivating a warm, comforting atmosphere in your home.

Sound

- Calming playlists
- Wind chimes
- Soft choral music
- Audiobook or podcast



Accents

- Large ceramic mugs
- Teapot or French press
- Indoor plants
- Wicker baskets



Lighting

- Tea lights and candle holders
- Himalayan salt lamp
- Fairy lights



Textiles

- Chunky knit or plush throw blankets
- Loungewear
- Wool or fleece socks
- Faux fur rug



Scent

- Incense sticks
- Essential oils (vanilla, lavender, cedarwood)
- Linen spray
- Scented candles



Creating cosy everyday moments

What feels cosy to one person might not resonate with another, which is why the most effective rituals are rooted in what brings us pleasure.

If you love your morning cup of tea or coffee, for example, you can transform this into a ritual by setting up a corner devoted to your chosen beverage. Choose one spot such as part of the kitchen counter, a small shelf or a side table, place your favourite mug(s) there and add appealing visual elements to it, such as a small tray, plant or cloth. Try slowing down the consumption process – grind beans slowly, breathe in the aroma and sit by the window while you enjoy your drink. This ritual isn't about the drink itself; it's about giving yourself a gentle beginning to the day rather than rushing through it.

If reading is your thing, consider creating a dedicated reading nook. This could be a comfortable chair, a pile of cushions on the floor, or even your bed layered with pillows and blankets.

If self-care brings you joy, try a regular at-home spa ritual. Once a week, set aside an evening dedicated entirely to rest – take a long bath or shower, use luxurious products such as a body oil or face mask, and apply skin care at an unhurried pace. Treat this time as non-negotiable.

Whatever you choose, what matters most is repetition. "Consistency matters more than length," says Dr King. "Small rituals are easier to maintain and more likely to become part of daily life."

When you return to the same comforting actions regularly, they begin to carry emotional weight. "The easiest way to begin is by slowing down something you already do, rather than adding more tasks," advises Dr King. "Choose one daily transition, such as waking up, finishing work, coming home, or getting ready for bed. These moments naturally invite ritual."

An example of this might be integrating cosy elements into your evening routine. A simple wind-down practice might start with changing into comfortable clothes as soon as you're home, signalling that the day's responsibilities are over. From there, choose activities that feel restorative rather than stimulating,

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Weave cosy rituals into everyday tasks

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such as reading, journaling or gentle stretching. Doing the same few actions each evening trains your body to recognise when it's time to slow down.

Cosy rituals don't need to be limited to just designated 'me time' – they can be woven into the fabric of even the most ordinary everyday tasks, like making the bed or folding laundry. What is important is that they are done mindfully. "Mindfulness helps cosy moments land in the body instead of passing by unnoticed," says Dr King. "Many people create comforting environments, but their attention remains elsewhere. Begin by slowing down whatever you are doing. Feel the warmth of a mug, the weight of a blanket, or the contact of your feet with the floor. Choose a sensation and stay with it for a few breaths. Cosiness becomes most supportive when we allow ourselves to fully feel it."





Creating cosy moments all year round

Cosiness isn't something to be reserved for cold evenings or winter weekends – it's a way of living that evolves with the seasons. Seasonal rituals remind us that life moves in cycles, not straight lines, and that each season can offer its own flavour of 'cosiness'. By adjusting your rituals throughout the year, you can stay connected to nature's rhythms.

Spring is a time of gentle renewal. As the days become longer and brighter, spring rituals tend to focus on lightness rather than enclosure. This might include decluttering and refreshing your home, opening windows or bringing in fresh flowers. These acts can feel symbolic, making space for what is to come next after the long, dark stretch of winter.

Summer calls for more outward-facing rituals. Think iced drinks in the afternoon, simple meals enjoyed outdoors, or evenings spent watering plants or taking a quiet walk at sunset. The key is not to overfill your days and to leave room for rest, even during this busy time of year.

Autumn is about slowing down and turning inwards. As the air cools and days shorten, there is a natural pull towards warmth, comfort and reflection, and rituals naturally slow down. This is the time for evenings spent at home, curling up with a book and reintroducing blankets and comforting meals.

Winter invites nourishment and deep restoration. Cooking hearty soups and stews, lighting candles in the late afternoon, and wearing warm layers indoors all help to create a sense of safety and comfort.

The most important takeaway here is that cosiness is a practice, something that you must intentionally cultivate. You don't need to completely overhaul your life. Choose one aspect of your home or routine and make it a little softer, slower and more intentional. Over time, these elements will add up to create a life that feels warmer, calmer and more gratifying.

Cosy day essentials

These nourishing foods, drinks and activities are perfect accompaniments for slowing down, nesting or romanticising a quiet day.

Comfort food and drinks

- Freshly baked bread
- Cinnamon buns
- Simple crockpot meals
- Cheese and crackers
- Seasonal fruit and vegetables
- Hot chocolate and marshmallows
- Honey and spices (e.g. cinnamon sticks, cardamom, ginger)
- Herbal teas (e.g. chamomile)



Comfort activities

- Reading a good book by candlelight
- Watching a comforting movie or TV show
- Watching rain or snowfall from a window
- Taking an afternoon nap under a blanket
- Knitting, crocheting or embroidering
- Drawing, painting or colouring
- Journalling
- Baking
- Doing a jigsaw puzzle
- Pressing flowers or arranging dried stems
- Doing absolutely nothing



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