

# Rest Up!

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*If you're struggling to remember the last time you woke up well-rested, refreshed, and energized, this one is for you! Let's explore the value of rest, what happens to our physical and mental health when we're burning the candle at both ends, and how to start to factor quality rest into the equation of our daily lives.*

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We all lead busy lives, often juggling our responsibilities and demands of work, family, and friends. Somehow, somewhere along the way, we've learned to put ourselves last on our list. And on our own list, rest is often the last thing on our minds.

## **We, the over-doers**

There are plenty of reasons for this, the first one being that we are a society of over-doers. We place great value on our *busyness*. We create endless to-do lists, tasks, activities, responsibilities, expectations, and life-maintenance chores. And when we finally have a moment to catch a breath, we connect with other people and the world on electronic devices, where we text, shop, and scan the latest distressing headlines... none of which is what any objective observer would qualify as restful or relaxing.

We tell ourselves we'll catch up on our sleep on the weekend, over the Holidays, when things get a little quieter at work, with our kids' school or social schedules.

## **What rest is**

Rest is a pause in the action, time to refresh, regroup and renew our energies. As human beings, we are meant to rest at regular intervals. When working out, for example, we instinctively allow our bodies brief periods of rest between activities. We realize that we need to pause, rather than go full-tilt. In fact, these short pauses during a physical workout actually allow us to carry on, meet, and often exceed our goals during a workout. In our daily lives, we need brief pauses in our

physical activities. We also need to rest our minds, reconnect with ourselves, and check in with our emotions at regular intervals.

## **Sick and tired**

What happens to us when we're exhausted? Ignoring our need to rest takes a toll on our physical health, mental health, and overall ability to function. Our immune systems become compromised, and we become more susceptible to viruses and colds. Our moods suffer. We become more easily upset and feel less hopeful and capable of successfully handling our tasks and challenges. Our ability to concentrate plummets, and we become more accident-prone. Creativity suffers along with our ability to think clearly and make decisions. All in all, when we're tired, burnt out, and exhausted, virtually every aspect of our lives suffers. We become sick and tired.

## **Return to rest**

Over 2,000 years ago, the Roman poet Ovid said, "Take a rest ... a field that has rested gives a bountiful crop." As young children, we naturally rest and relax. We are learning and growing at such an intense rate. We are highly attuned to our need to rest, and we have not yet learned to ignore the need to pause. But somewhere along the way, we begin to allow our to-do lists to override the signals that our bodies and minds send us that tell us we need to rest. As adults, we may not need — though some of us may want — a nap in the middle of a busy day, we still need brief breaks from concentrating, performing taxing mental or physical tasks, or between meetings. And when the working day is done,

though we may be facing a long list of life tasks, we require physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual rest. The challenge is this: How do we factor rest into our busy lives.

### **Paying attention to ourselves**

We can begin to create quality resting habits by tuning in to how we are feeling throughout the course of each day. For example, rather than push through a brain fog while concentrating on a task, pause, and take a few moments to breathe deeply and reconnect with yourself. Or, if you can, get outside for a few minutes of sunlight, or pause for a healthy snack. Or, if you are feeling unwell, rearrange your schedule, and concentrate on completing only the most essential of the tasks you have planned for the day. Give your body a chance to rest and your immune system an opportunity to recharge.

### **Scheduling in time to rest**

Even when you're busy, schedule rest into your daily routine. Rather than rely on stimulants, like caffeine and empty carbohydrates and sugar — which can negatively impact our physical health and lead to everything from weight gain to insomnia — brief periods of pause from physical and mental labor, renews our ability to function on every level throughout the day. And setting healthy boundaries around demands on your limited time and energies is critical to allow yourself time to relax and arrest.

### **Good sleep hygiene**

When the day is done and it's time for sleep, we have a lot of rethinking to do! During a good night's sleep, we cycle through phases of light and deep sleep. In deep sleep, we rest and repair our central nervous system, our muscles, and our minds. When we're sick, we need more sleep, as sleep helps rebuild and recharge our immune systems.

Through poor sleep hygiene, like eating or exercising before bed, binge-watching movies or TV shows on our laptops or phones, checking emails, and scrolling through Instagram and other social media just before closing our eyes over-stimulates our minds, we stimulate the metabolism and undermine our ability to wind down and fall asleep. It is crucial to define a time period before we go to bed where we wind down and allow our bodies and minds to arrive at a place of calmness, ready for deep, quality sleep. If the last time you woke up well-rested, refreshed, and energized is a distant memory, there's no time like the present to start to factor quality rest into the equation of your days and nights.

### **Rethinking Rest**

Here are five powerful steps to help you rest better and more effectively:

- **Pay** attention to how you are feeling. When your body or mind needs to rest, even a brief pause can provide the rest and rejuvenation you need
- **Schedule** rest into the equation of your day. After all, what gets scheduled gets done
- **Make** plans that include quality rest and relaxation when approaching demanding workloads, or challenging family times. Don't allow much-needed rest to drop off the to-do list when the going gets tough, and you need rest more than ever
- **Set** healthy boundaries around your time and energies. Learn to say no to a request or demand when saying yes means you'll be burning the candle at both ends
- **Factor** quality sleep into your daily routine, including practicing good sleep hygiene in the hours before bedtime

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**About the author**

*Dr. Monica Vermani is a Clinical Psychologist specializing in treating trauma, stress and mood & anxiety disorders, and the founder of Start Living Corporate Wellness. She is a well-known speaker, columnist and advocate in the field of mental health and wellness. Her new book, A Deeper Wellness, is now available for purchase at <https://www.book.a deeperwellness.com>, and her in-depth online self-help program, A Deeper Wellness, offers powerful mental health guidance, life skills, knowledge and healing, anywhere, anytime. <https://www.a deeperwellness.com/> <https://www.drmonicavermani.com/>*



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