

rest

What it is

A simple definition of rest is *'to cease movement in order to relax, refresh oneself, and recover strength.'* Rest differs from sleep in that it is active, conscious, and promotes a perceptual, wordless thinking mode.

Why we need it

Rest is a hard-wired biological imperative, but many of us are regularly 'over-moving'. In one survey, 51% of US workers reported not taking a regular lunch break; for those who did, half spent the time on social media or email. Our reluctance to rest is real.

Active rest rebalances us from motion in numerous ways:

- facilitates regulation of heart rate and respiration
- supports digestion, detoxification, and cellular repair
- promotes calm through the release of serotonin
- boosts learning by strengthening memories
- enhances decision-making and task performance

How to do it

When we practice rest, we make use of one or more of these five elements:

1. Belly breathing – emphasize lengthening the exhale
2. Mindfulness – notice thoughts, breath, or sounds
3. Visualization – imagine a sensory experience
4. Restorative postures – stand up, fold forward, lie down, or put your legs up the wall
5. Music – listen to songs that use sound therapy principles

Our always-on culture has created an expectation of motion based on the false belief that self-care is selfish. The time has come to rebalance by embracing the restorative power of rest.

