

Momentum

Finding time to unwind



Yale

Counseling & Support Services
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Finding time to recover and relax

- ✓ Document your activities in detail for a day or two. Identify activities that are your time-wasters. Minimize them so you have more time for fulfilling, relaxing activities.
- ✓ Don't worry about telling friends and family that you need some quiet alone time. Put restorative activities on your schedule, and keep those appointments!
- ✓ Take brief breaks during your workday, as appropriate to your job. Deep breathing, stretching and walking are good at-work stress busters.

The importance of relaxing

Is relaxation at the bottom of your list of priorities? It is for many people. To boost your health and wellness, you'll need to value relaxation more and carve out time to unwind amidst your busy schedule.

You might try jumping off the daily treadmill for a few hours and taking a thoughtful look at your life. Do you value all the elements of your current routine? What do you really enjoy doing, yet have little time to do?

Whether it's having a cup of coffee with a friend, sitting still in a quiet session of meditation, or working on a long-neglected art project, *be sure to schedule your relaxation times*. They are every bit as important as the other to-do's on your weekly calendar. View them as appointments that you won't cancel unless an emergency arises.

Research shows that relaxation keeps your heart healthier, cuts stress, reduces muscle tension, improves brain function and memory, and helps you avoid depression, anxiety, and obesity. It boosts your immune system and helps alleviate the symptoms of many medical and psychological disorders. Relaxing is important!



Make your relaxation time a priority. The key to achieving wellness is balance: a manageable mix of work, family and friend time, relaxation, study, sleep, healthy eating and exercise.

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Relaxation techniques

Here are just a few of the easiest relaxation methods that you can do almost anywhere:

Deep breathing

Deep breathing involves taking slow, deep breaths through the nose, and exhaling gradually through the mouth to let the whole body relax a little more with each breath.

Progressive (deep) muscle relaxation

Progressive (deep) muscle relaxation involves alternately tensing, and then releasing, groups of muscles throughout the body. Start with your facial muscles then move on to other muscle groups—neck, shoulders, arms, chest, stomach, legs and feet—for full-body relaxation.

Meditation

Meditation involves resting in a comfortable position without distractions. Focus your attention on only one thing. This can be a word or phrase, your breathing, a sound or an image. Re-focus your attention each time you become distracted.

Visualization

Visualization involves using your imagination to create a visual image of a relaxing, soothing or healing place. Imagine every part of this image—sight, sound, taste, motion and texture—to make it as real as possible.

Teaching children how to unwind



Coping skills help at any age

Children can feel anxious and exhausted trying to keep up with academic pressures, peer problems and packed schedules. Like adults, children need to escape stress so they can restore their still-developing bodies and minds. Teach them relaxation skills like those described above; learning to relax can be a valuable life lesson.



Taking breaks cuts stress

If, for example, a homework assignment is proving daunting, recommend that your child step away briefly and take a break. Good break-time activities including having a healthy snack, stretching, taking a walk, riding a bike, climbing, jogging, cuddling with the dog, or simply playing outdoors with friends or siblings.



Try the personal touch

Have some silly laughter time with your child. This can provide a great tension-busting break. Or, hold your child on your lap (or sit close by) and read a story or sing a song together. Some loving hugs or a back massage also can greatly help ease your child's stress.



Webinar—Join us July 13, 2016 for *Restorative Practices to Well-being*—a webinar about relaxation techniques you can use. [Register here.](#)