

What is Rest?

Rest is incredibly important for your recovery and well-being. Rest allows your body to get a break from the stress, stimulation and exertion of your day. Think of rest as something that is restorative and necessary. When thinking about getting into a restful state, you want to activate your parasympathetic nervous system (PNS), also known as your body's rest and digest mode. By activating your PNS, you will decrease your heart rate and blood pressure, slow down your breathing rate and help digestion.

- 1. Breathe through your nose.** Breathing through your nose has a calming effect on your body and helps activate your diaphragm to allow for a deeper and more lengthened breath.
- 2. Engage with nature indoors/outdoors.** Sit outside in the sun, stand on the lawn, go to the park, dip your feet into the lake, or look at the flowers on your street.

If you can't get outside, some of these activities can help:

- sitting by the window in natural light
- looking out the window at a tree/bird
- listening to birdsongs
- having house plants
- sniff fresh herbs/flowers
- play nature sounds or water sounds

Consider practicing the 54321 technique when engaging with nature

5-4-3-2-1 Technique

Using the 5-4-3-2-1 technique, you will purposefully take in the details of your surroundings using each of your senses. Strive to notice small details that your mind would usually tune out, such as distant sounds, or the texture of an ordinary object.



What are 5 things you can see? Look for small details such as a pattern on the ceiling, the way light reflects off a surface, or an object you never noticed.



What are 4 things you can feel? Notice the sensation of clothing on your body, the sun on your skin, or the feeling of the chair you are sitting in. Pick up an object and examine its weight, texture, and other physical qualities.



What are 3 things you can hear? Pay special attention to the sounds your mind has tuned out, such as a ticking clock, distant traffic, or trees blowing in the wind.



What are 2 things you can smell? Try to notice smells in the air around you, like an air freshener or freshly mowed grass. You may also look around for something that has a scent, such as a flower or an unlit candle.



What is 1 thing you can taste? Carry gum, candy, or small snacks for this step. Pop one in your mouth and focus your attention closely on the flavors.

*Provided by TherapistAid.com

3. Lying in a dark and quiet space. The absence of any stimuli can be very helpful as your brain can rest and not have to process any information. Many people find that this is a very helpful way to rest when they have been with other people or coming from an overstimulated activity. When lying down, consider the surface that your body comes into contact with i.e. a bed, sofa, carpet, hardwood floors. Each surface can have different sensations.

4. Meditation. A helpful practice to help reduce stress and anxiety, improve sleep, and reduce pain. If you are new to meditation, it is a way to bring your mind to focus and redirect your thoughts. You can start with short meditations that are just a few minutes long and grow your practice from there. You can find many guided meditations on apps like Calm or Balance. You can also check out <https://www.mindful.org/> for some practices:

[A 3-Minute Body Scan Meditation to Cultivate Mindfulness - Mindful](#)

[A 10-Minute Full Body Scan Meditation - Mindful](#)

5. Progressive muscle relaxation. A practice that is typically done lying down in a quiet space. Starting at your feet, you tense and relax your muscles groups all the way up to your head while also doing nasal breathing. This engages both body and mind to help you relax. You can try this audio guide: <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Alberta/Alberta%20Images/Audio-Tracks/progressive-muscle-relaxation.mp3>

During this exercise, be mindful of how body responds. It can be too much to perform multiple movements of tension so stop if needed.

6. Soft music. Depending on your tolerance for sound, soft music can be very soothing and restorative. Music can also be nostalgic and attached to particular memories. Find music that suits your tolerance, preference, and mood. Some people find music with lyrics to be a lot to process, and prefer instrumental music right now.

7. Yoga. Gentle movement can help your body into a restful state. Consider Restorative Yoga, Yin Yoga or Yoga Nidra that focus on breathing and are slower paced. Do not push your body to do something that does not feel good, the goal of this is to help your body relax and enter into a more restful state.

10-minute Yoga Nidra practice: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ApQ9NovqnA4>

10-minute Gentle Chair Yoga: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrVE1a2vqvA>

10-minute Restorative Yoga on the mat: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpW33Celubg>

Other Resources

For an easy to understand description of the parasympathetic nervous system and ways to activate it, you can refer to <https://www.thedeepsleepco.com/parasympathetic-nervous-system/>

**This website does sell products, and we are not endorsing these specific products, but the information on the PNS is helpful*

10 Quick Ways to Activate your Parasympathetic Nervous System

<https://braingardening.com/10-quick-ways-to-activate-your-parasympathetic-nervous-system/>

45 Techniques to Activate Your Parasympathetic Nervous System and Lower Stress

<https://healyournervoussystem.com/45-techniques-to-activate-your-parasympathetic-nervous-system-and-lower-stress/>