

# How to Relax, Unwind and Reduce Stress

Many of us work hard but take little time to relax. Learn how to relax with some simple and enjoyable activities for more peace and balance in your life.

Many of us work hard to achieve a successful career. We spend years in school, and then get a good paying job that we think will bring us a comfortable life. Then one day we realize that all we seem to do is work and have forgotten how to relax.

There's nothing wrong with being ambitious and trying to attain a comfortable living. The problem that many of us have is that we don't maintain a good work-life balance. We know how to work, but we don't know how to unwind and enjoy life when we're not.

'Sometimes the most productive thing you can do is relax.' ~ Mark Black

In this article, I'm going to show you how to relax with some simple and enjoyable activities, so you can find more peace and balance in your life.

## Why Should You Relax?

Some of the reasons for relaxing may be obvious. You will feel more calm and at ease, and less stressed out. Some of the less obvious reasons are improvements in your health.

Relaxation can have a significant impact on your health. Some of the benefits are lower blood pressure, lower risk of heart disease, fewer digestive problems, and more. Relaxation can also help you think more clearly, which leads to better decision-making and improved memory.

Overall, your quality of life will be much better. You'll feel better physically, mentally, and emotionally. Through the course of your life, you will preserve your good health as long as possible. That is, you'll live longer, healthier, and happier.

## Unwinding Is Easy

Relaxing and unwinding is easier than you might think. It is actually more normal for you to be relaxed than stressed out. You see, if we leave our mind alone, it will naturally slow down. It is much like driving your car down the road. Take your foot off the accelerator, and eventually the car will slow down to a crawl.

The problem is that we never leave our mind alone. We're always agitating it through our various activities and background noise. Relaxing and unwinding is a process. It takes a little time of reduced sensory stimulation.

# How to Relax

As you'll see, most of the suggestions below revolve around doing less, or diverting your attention to more pleasant things. They will help slow down your mind and give you a break from the things that cause you stress.

## 1. Take a Warm Bath

A warm bath has several benefits. It will help you relax physically and mentally. The warm water will relax your muscles and relieve tension and soreness.

In addition, the quiet environment will help calm your mind and improve your mood. By promoting both physical and mental relaxation, the warm bath will help you sleep better, which reduces stress and anxiety.<sup>[1]</sup>

## 2. Take up a Hobby

Get involved in your favorite hobby, preferably one that is relaxing. The ones that are most relaxing are passive activities, such as watching television, reading a book, or listening to some soothing music.

The important thing about choosing a hobby is doing something you love. This will help you divert your attention from the things that cause you stress, and give your attention to things that bring you joy and happiness.

Remember, your job is only one aspect of your life. Its purpose is to provide you with the things you need to survive and that bring you fulfillment. Don't neglect the latter.<sup>[2]</sup>

## 3. Create a Bedtime Ritual

Before turning in for the night is an ideal time to relax and unwind. It is a time we associate with tending to our personal needs, a time for rest after a busy day. The important aspect of a bedtime ritual is repetition. This will train your mind to automatically go into a relaxed state as you begin your ritual.<sup>[3]</sup>

Here is a sample bedtime ritual to unwind: Turn down the lights; maybe light a candle. Climb in bed and feel the cool sheets on your body. As you sit there, take a few mindful breaths to begin calming your thoughts. Read a few passages from an inspirational book, and take a few moments to savor the wisdom and beauty of the reading. Turn off the lights, get comfortable in your bed, and go to sleep.<sup>[4]</sup>

## 4. Take a Bathroom Break

It's amazing how much a bathroom break can help you relax. I think there a couple of reasons for this. First, it's easy to give ourselves permission to go to the bathroom. Second, by closing the door behind us, we can shut out the world for just a few minutes.

The great thing about a bathroom break is that we can do it anytime, and by nature, most of the things we do in the bathroom are relaxing.

## 5. Go Outside

Like a bathroom break, going outside can get us away from the busy world for a few minutes. The fresh air and change of scenery can help us clear our mind.<sup>[5]</sup> In addition, seeing the rest of the world helps us put things into a larger perspective. It helps us see beyond our own busy lives.

So, go outside: smell the fresh air, listen to the birds sing, admire the beauty of the trees and flowers, and just take it all in.

## **6. Spend Time With Loved Ones**

For many of us, our family and friends bring us a great deal of joy and fulfillment. Spending time with them helps us relax and unwind, especially after a busy day.

When spending time with loved ones, it's important to make sure you are fully present. Don't let your job or your troubles dominate your attention when you are with them. It is truly disheartening when you are with a loved one whose mind is somewhere else. This simply creates more stress and conflict in the family.

## **7. Take a Vacation**

One of the best ways to relax and unwind is to take a vacation. Make sure it is a real vacation, that is, at least a week or two long. It can take several days for you to get your mind off work.

Another aspect of a good vacation is that you go some place you've never been to before. The reason for this is that unfamiliar surroundings force your mind to be in the present moment, which can help you relax.

On the other hand, if you have a place that you really love and where you have an easy time relaxing, then by all means go there. The important thing is that you're able to forget about work for a few days.

It is also a good idea to go some place where there isn't cell phone reception, or at least keep your phone off and put away most of the time you are on your vacation. It's hard for many of us to get away from our mobile devices, which are a source of mental agitation.

And last but not least, make sure you relax while you're on your vacation. Don't schedule a bunch of activities that will keep you busy your entire vacation. Schedule in some quiet time to relax and unwind. You don't want to go back home needing a few days to recuperate from your vacation.

## **8. Try Meditation**

Meditation is a powerful tool to help you relax. A recent study found that just 15 minutes of meditation is the equivalent of one day of vacation in helping you relax.<sup>[6]</sup> Now, that is pretty amazing!

There are various forms of meditation. The one I recommend is mindfulness meditation. I like mindfulness meditation because the practice is simple, robust, and flexible. You can use it to fit your schedule and suit your lifestyle.

The other great thing about mindfulness meditation is that it is non-religious, so you don't have to adhere to any religion or doctrine. All you basically have to do is sit quietly for a few minutes and follow your breath. You don't have to do it perfectly, and you don't have to meditate for long periods to get the benefits.

There are lots of resources for learning mindfulness meditation, such as books, CDs, and articles. Find a resource that actually teaches you the techniques.

## Final Thoughts

On our path to a successful career, most of us are never taught how to relax and unwind. We learn all about our field of study and how to be successful in our careers, but rarely are we taught how to be successful in life.

A successful life consists of a good work-life balance. It's important to work hard at something we like and be able to relax and not let our work consume our whole lives. We need to learn how to enjoy our lives along the way. If we don't, then what is the whole point of working so hard?

If you want more balance in your life, then make relaxation a part of your routine. Not only will you feel better, but you will also be more productive and gain more satisfaction from your work and your personal life.

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