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BE WELL

## It's Time to Take a Break!

By Debbie DeAngelo  
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For many, life has become a whirlwind of activity. Kids are overscheduled and adults don't have enough breathing room. As we race through our day at a frenetic pace, often without noticing most of it, let alone enjoying any of it, I have to wonder how long it will take for this fast-paced lifestyle to catch up with us.

Most people are overwhelmed, overworked, under-rested, and under-enjoyed. We feel tired because we are tired ... both physically and emotionally. Even if we recognize that life feels out of control and would like to exit from this speedway,

we often don't have time to figure out how to go about it. In the meantime, our body needs support before it runs out of fuel.

### **Ready, Set ... Reset**

Short of a major life overhaul, is there anything else that we can do to give ourselves a mental and physical reset, especially during the busy holiday season? Thankfully, yes. There are many ways to reboot our bodies daily. Select one or two that appeal to you, or come up with one of your own, and introduce them on a regular basis.

**Minimize multitasking.** Initially the concept of multitasking seemed so promising, but time has proven that it has left us mentally scattered and stressed. Often, what we think of as multitasking is actually microtasking. This means rapidly switching back and forth between tasks, not doing both tasks at once. Studies have found that each task ends up taking more time, we make more mistakes, and our brain doesn't encode much of what we're doing into long-term memory. Since our brain is wired to be a monotasker, we really aren't further ahead by constantly splitting our attention in this way. Just more distracted. Practice focusing on one thing at a time. Great starting points would be while driving, while interacting with others, and while working on detailed projects.

**Nab a nap.** A short daytime snooze delivers quite a few perks. It boosts workday performance, memory, and the ability to complete complex tasks. Naps also improve physical functioning, such as energy level, endurance, reaction times, and combat the effects of stress. As you can see, it helps us to cope with the negative impact of living life in the fast lane. To avoid feeling groggy or to set yourself up for a poor night's sleep, naps should only last 20 to 30 minutes and should occur prior to 3 p.m.

**Bust a move.** Sitting for extended periods is tough on the body and can actually make you feel more tired. That's why it's important to move as much as you can during the day. Movement revs our metabolism and leaves us feeling physically and mentally refreshed. Find creative ways to build more mobility into your day. This can include taking a few laps around the house or office and if there are stairs, even better; walking or standing while on the phone; standing while at the computer; performing some chair exercises or office calisthenics a few times during the day; taking stretch breaks; scheduling walk and talk meetings; or my personal favorite, cranking up your favorite music and dancing.

**Get out more.** Outside, that is. I think most of us realize how much better we feel after being outdoors or spending time in nature. We just don't think we have time to do it. It doesn't require spending lengthy periods of time outdoors to reap the rewards. Savor your morning coffee on the porch, take the dog for a walk, spend time in your garden, gaze up at the stars or bundle up for a brisk

winter walk. The benefits include elevated mood, improved sleep, mental restoration, and boosted resistance to infection.

**Savor sound of silence.** It's a noisy world. We're constantly surrounded by sound ... talking, TV, music, text and ring tones, traffic, construction, and the list goes on and on. Whether we realize it or not, it can be overstimulating. Enjoying some quiet time helps to lower blood pressure, calm racing thoughts, reduce stress hormones and stimulate creativity. Simple strategies include getting up 20 minutes before everyone else in the house, shutting off the background noise (i.e., the TV) for 30 minutes, silencing your cell phone for a few hours, and taking a walk in a low-traffic area.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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