

# SIMPLIFY MAGAZINE

· A QUARTERLY, DIGITAL PUBLICATION FOR FAMILIES ·

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# Calm: A Letter from the Founder

There's a powerful strength in finding calm—a clarity that only comes when we make space for it. Amid life's daily demands, calm can feel elusive. Yet the peace we seek isn't far away; it's waiting for us to embrace it with intention. This issue of *Simplify Magazine* brings together fresh perspectives and practical tools to help you cultivate calm, even in the busiest times of your life.

Inside, you'll find insights on establishing mindful routines, managing stress triggers, setting boundaries with technology, and transforming your home into a sanctuary of peace. Each article offers guidance on how to make every day a bit calmer and more intentional, helping you to invite moments of calm that make a real difference.

Our contributors include a *New York Times* bestselling author, a productivity expert, a filmmaker and thought leader, and more. Each writer offers practical advice and personal stories to help you embrace a calm mindset, even amid life's demands.

We hope this issue guides you toward a life where calm is more than an occasional experience but a foundation for deeper clarity, joy, and fulfillment.

With you on this journey,  
Joshua Becker

# An Investment Worth Making: The Cultivation of Calm

*Shannon Ables*



It all begins with calm.

Restful nights of slumber, success in our endeavors, improved relationships, a flourishing garden, discovery of our dharma, delicious meals, an abundance of happy moments, true love in all its shapes and forms, and endless other hopes and wishes we would like to experience in our everyday—each is evidence of a life grounded in true contentment, and it all begins with finding calm.

The simple equation to remember is that when we find calm, we then gain clarity. Meditation teacher Andy Puddicombe teaches that when we find clarity we begin making decisions that will lead to contentment. And when we engage with the world from a place of contentment, we live with compassion, not only toward the larger world but toward ourselves as well. This cycle of clarity, contentment, and compassion benefits all that touches our life—our health, our relationships, our mindset, and thus our well-being, as we begin to live a deeply fulfilling life each and every day.

Create calm in order to first hear the message. Then maintain calm in order to understand what it is trying to say for your life journey.

## **Cleaning the Windows**

This past October, at my home and garden in Bend, Oregon, the wind was absent and the sky was clear. So I stepped outside into the

garden, not to garden, but to clean my windows so I could better *see* my garden from inside the house.

The cleaning away of the accumulated dust and debris seemed to brighten the entire interior of the house. It sharpened the view of the autumnal colors on the leaves of the cherry and peach trees, hydrangeas and viburnum, now dazzling with their blushes, gold- and rust-colored hues.

You may be wondering what clean windows have to do with finding calm in our everyday lives. In fact, both create the clarity to enjoy the benefits of finding what will bring us deep, enduring contentment and elevate the quality of our days—the ordinary and the extraordinary days.

In order to gain the clarity attained by cleaning the windows, I had to do intentional work. And before that, in order to recognize that the windows had seen cleaner days, I had to be aware of and have the confidence to pursue the potential of what lay beyond the current status.

In this instance, I knew what would be gained by cleaning my windows. Once I had removed the dirt and storm debris, along with dust and cobwebs, the view would be pristine. But because the accumulation had been gradual, it was less apparent what I had lost by putting off the task. I had an okay view, but not a clear one. The equivalent in our everyday is that we become accustomed to not

being calm and instead settle into living harried lives of reaction that disables our ability to see opportunities that would enrich the quality of our lives.

In order to understand why we cannot find peace in our lives, feel comfortable in our beings, contented in our everyday lives both personal and professional, we have to find the calm.

Why?

Even if the message in our day-to-day lives is glaringly apparent that something is not right or something doesn't make us comfortable (we see streaks and cobwebs plain as day on the window), we may believe we have the time to solve our dilemma. But here's the catch. If we don't make the time, we cannot arrive at calm. Because in order to make the best decision to move ourselves forward well, we need to prioritize calm and rest in this space of tranquility in order to gain clarity about what is the next best step for our unique life journey.

If we are not calm, we may think we have pinpointed the reason for our discomfort, our angst, our unease, but often we are off the mark, either by looking outside of ourselves and avoiding responsibility for our role or quickly jumping on a decision we think will resolve it. If we hurry, it may be because we don't have the time to let the contemplations and ponderings settle and crystalize so that we can discern what is substantive and worth examination and what are unnecessary distractions.

## The Effects of Calmness

Creating regular calm creates mental space. And that space is where we find clarity.

We begin the journey of contentment by being calm. And the tool that helps us find calm, and continues to be a skill to practice as we maintain true contentment, is presence. We cannot reach the clarity we need until we bring ourselves to the present moment and acknowledge we must begin with, or return to, finding calm.

What happens when calm is not present, yet we try to make decisions to improve our lives?

- We are influenced by others even when we think we are thinking for ourselves—our ability to think critically is diminished.
- We make decisions that are intended to be helpful but that cause more stress.
- We engage in panicking, over-reacting, feeling anxious, being quick to anger and feeling frustrated—all unwanted, reactive behaviors.
- Our quality of overall health decreases as cortisol and adrenaline are regularly released in stressful situations and our

blood pressure rises. Repeated, this physical response takes a toll on our health.

What happens when we regularly embrace and prioritize being and experiencing a state of calm in our everyday lives?

- We can more easily step back from “battles” that need not be battles.
- We are comfortable (or more comfortable) with letting unwanted situations sit momentarily, as we patiently wait to see how other parties involved engage and also give ourselves time to decide the best way forward (or if we need to engage at all).
- We solve problems constructively and without regret.
- We step outside of our myopic view and become more aware of others’ views. “Stepping into their shoes,” we become more rational, more thoughtful, but also gain clarity about what is the best path forward as we work with different people in different situations.
- We deepen trust with others as they see we are able to remain calm even in unwanted situations—exhibiting awareness, not apathy, but not jumping to conclusions, and instead, letting the dust settle before considering the next step.

## Everyday Calm

The first step to living a life of everyday calm is acknowledging that currently you are not experiencing it: your life, your being, *you* are not calm. In other words, because of this lack, you are not able to find your footing in your everyday and thus are constantly moving, thinking, doing with so much frequency that you cannot find calm. You cannot be still, either physically in your daily routine or in your mind.

Questions to ask yourself to determine if you are living with everyday calm:

- Are you at peace with how you engage with the world—clients, colleagues, loved ones, random strangers you interact with while going about your errands, and so on?
- Are you making decisions that align with your true self, your values, the life journey you are on or wish to be on?

The discomfort felt while we are growing and evolving into our wiser, more capable selves is temporary and not the same as discomfort that arises from an action we are not proud of, or that creates more frustration than tranquility. We can know the true reasons for our discomfort only when we create space to be calm.

When you find this calm, decisions become easier to make with confidence that they align with what not only brings you to life but also contributes to the greater world in the unique and passionate way that only you can. Calm is a source for infusing both ourselves and others with energy.

## **Reach Out for It**

As the afternoon sun beams through the freshly cleaned windows in the dining and living room, I am reminded that, by tending to the unnecessary clutter, I can more clearly see what causes stress and obstructs my view to fully appreciate the beauty of the garden that sits outside my window, thus what disrupts my calm. It is when I can see with clarity this truth that I then enable myself to get back on the track of doing what nurtures my well-being and contributes to the life I want to live.

So today, why not take a bit of time to contemplate your state of daily calm? Begin to explore what disrupts it (or prevents it) and begin stepping back into the regular practice of prioritizing this state of being—present, open minded, aware, and thus calm. Almost immediately you will begin to feel a weight has been lifted from your shoulders, a feeling of liberation, and in that moment you will recognize the full weight you were carrying unnecessarily.

It is not a luxury to live in a state of calm. In fact, it is a necessity that will reduce poor decisions, unnecessary stress, and future longings of

unfulfilled dreams. Find your calm. Find a life you love living every single day. Yes, it is possible, and you've just been given the first key to doing it.

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**Shannon Ables** has been sharing the benefits of savoring a life of true contentment on [The Simply Luxurious Life blog](#) since 2009. Her accompanying podcast, *The Simple Sophisticate*, releases two new episodes each month. She is the author of three books and teaches a contentment master class. She lives in Bend, Oregon, with her two dogs, Norman and Nelle.

# 20 Super-Practical Ways to Bring More Calm into Your Home

*Joshua Becker*



Work is hectic. Schedules are hectic. The kids are hectic. Almost all of life can be hectic.

Your home shouldn't be.

Your home should be the antidote to stress. It ought to be a place of rest, respite, and relaxation.

Our homes are not places to retreat forever. But they should be places of peace, of acceptance, and of calm—places where we can recharge to live our best lives out in the world, making a difference where we can.

That's why having a calm and rejuvenating home is so important.

As the founder and editor of *Simplify Magazine*, I have the opportunity to know the themes and content of each issue before anyone else. For this issue on the important topic of *Calm*, I want to do what I do best: help people create environments in their home and life that result in calm and intentionality. Because once we create calm at home, we are in a better place to discover it elsewhere.

For that purpose, here are 20 super-practical and immediately implementable steps to reduce stress and increase calm in your living space.

1. Clear your countertops.

Leaving items on countertops is convenient, but it can become a source of visual clutter. A tidy, clear countertop reduces mental noise, creating a calmer kitchen or bathroom. You don't need to remove everything, but you'll likely feel more at ease with less on display.

## 2. Organize the entryway.

The entryway is the first part of your home that greets you each day, so keeping it tidy is essential. Designate a space for keys, bags, shoes, and coats, and make sure it's easy to keep organized. A calm entryway can set a positive tone and make coming home a more relaxing experience.

## 3. Simplify your pet's stuff.

Just like us, pets accumulate things—leashes, toys, beds, and more. Keeping these items in one spot or container makes cleanup simpler and ensures your pet's items don't overtake the space. A tidy area for pet essentials keeps things calmer for both you and your pet.

## 4. Tackle one-minute projects immediately.

This concept from Gretchen Rubin is a powerful one: if a task takes less than a minute to complete, do it right away. Applying this approach throughout your home keeps little tasks from piling up. It's

a simple practice that makes a big difference, and over time it can help make your entire home feel calmer.

#### 5. Reset your living room every evening.

Before heading to bed each night, spend a few minutes tidying up the living room or other high-traffic areas. Without this practice, yesterday's clutter often spills into the present, affecting the start of each new day. Taking 10 minutes each evening to reset your space brings calm and makes tomorrow that much easier.

#### 6. Display only meaningful decorations.

Decorations can enhance the feeling of comfort in a home, but too many can overwhelm it. Choose decorations that truly resonate with you and represent your story. When you select meaningful pieces with intention, they make a house feel more like home without cluttering your space.

#### 7. Utilize closed storage for small items.

A simple but effective way to keep calm in your home is by using closed storage solutions for small items. From baskets to drawers, closed storage keeps visual clutter out of sight. This approach ensures that even if you need to store things within reach, they don't create chaos on every surface.

## 8. Minimize your dishes and utensils.

Our kitchens can be a source of both comfort and clutter. Reduce your collection of dishes, utensils, and glassware to what you truly need, and you'll likely notice a shift. Fewer dishes make for a quicker cleanup and a kitchen that feels easier to navigate. Plus, you'll have more room for essentials and less hassle keeping everything organized.

## 9. Identify “homes” for everything you own.

Having a designated place for each item in your home brings clarity and calm. When everything—from toys to toiletries—has a specific spot, cleanup becomes easier, and the sense of order grows. Assigning homes for items also minimizes the likelihood of clutter returning.

## 10. Declutter digital devices and cables.

Digital devices have become an integral part of our homes, but their presence can sometimes create stress. Chargers, cords, and electronic gadgets can clutter up counters and tables. Designate a specific area for your digital devices, and try to keep cords and chargers organized. This small step helps reduce digital clutter and keeps your space looking calm and organized.

## 11. Simplify your meal routine.

Meal planning can be a time-consuming, stressful part of daily life. One way to simplify is by embracing a few go-to meals that you and your family enjoy and can rotate through the week. By repeating healthy, enjoyable meals, you eliminate the stress of decision-making around food and bring calm to your kitchen routine.

#### 12. Let in natural light.

Natural light can transform a room, making it feel more open, warm, and inviting. Open blinds and curtains each day to let in as much natural light as possible. For rooms without windows, consider adding soft, warm lighting that mimics daylight. Lighting plays a big role in creating a calm, peaceful atmosphere.

#### 13. Practice the one-in, one-out rule.

Accumulation often leads to stress, and it's easy to let new items pile up in our homes. A simple rule to combat this is the "one in, one out" approach. Whenever you bring in a new item—whether it's clothing, a gadget, or a decorative item—make a habit of letting go of something similar. This method helps keep clutter at bay and brings a sense of balance.

#### 14. Keep your garage tidy.

Our garages are often the first thing we see when we arrive home, and a cluttered garage can set a chaotic tone. Keeping this space

organized and tidy helps ensure that home feels like a place of calm and order from the moment you step inside.

#### 15. Own fewer toys.

If you're a parent, toys may be a constant source of stress. Although we buy toys to make our children's lives more enjoyable, they can sometimes lead to frustration and overstimulation. Fewer toys reduce clutter and give children more space to explore and play. Studies even suggest that fewer toys may encourage creativity and focus.

#### 16. Remove 33 percent of your wardrobe.

If you're looking for a quick way to feel calm and clearheaded, try decluttering your closet. Removing even a third of your clothing makes mornings simpler. No more peering into a packed closet, only to wear the same favorites anyway. A less crowded wardrobe reduces decision fatigue and helps start your day with calm.

#### 17. Be intentional with the purpose of each room in your home.

Our homes serve us in different ways, and each room has a role. Take time to clarify the purpose of each space in your home, and then adjust the contents accordingly. If you intend a room for relaxation, remove the items that don't support that purpose. Clear, dedicated spaces create calm and make each room more useful.

## 18. Complete (or discard) unfinished projects.

Unfinished repair or upgrade projects around the house can create low-level stress that lingers in the background of our minds. Today, consider whether you'll finish a project or let it go. Declaring “project bankruptcy” by discarding an unfinished item may not feel easy, but it's freeing. The more you practice finishing or discarding projects, the more natural it becomes.

## 19. Use calming colors in your decor.

Color impacts our mood, often more than we realize. By choosing calm, neutral tones like soft blues, greens, or warm earth shades for your decor, you can create a more serene space. These colors foster a sense of relaxation and calm, while busy patterns or bright colors can sometimes feel overwhelming.

## 20. Live below your means.

Financial stress is a significant source of anxiety for many households. By adopting the practice of living below your means, you can lessen this burden. Focus on mindful spending and let go of the impulse to keep up with the latest purchases. Living below your means creates financial breathing room and brings a deeper sense of peace.

If you are just starting on the road to owning less, some of these steps may sound difficult to complete. But you'll be surprised how simple many of them become when you first take the step to minimize the possessions you don't need.

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**Joshua Becker** is the founder of [Becoming Minimalist](#). He is also the founder of *Simplify Magazine* and [The Hope Effect](#), a nonprofit organization changing how the world cares for orphaned and vulnerable children.

# Make Peace with Your Shame Triggers (to Soothe Your Soul)

*Erica Layne*



I vaguely remember signing the permission slip—a paper and pen shoved into my hands amid the morning hustle. A couple of weeks later, my preteen son woke up at 7 am, just like my kids do every weekday, and told me with a smile in his eyes that he was staying home—he was job-shadowing me.

The memory of a permission slip flashed in front of my eyes. I had agreed to this? Oh. RIGHT. I HAD agreed to this.

My son was staying home to watch me work.

My heart dropped to my stomach as I realized that I had appointments out of the house that day—appointments that weren't even related to my career! Of the seven hours that our kids are typically at school, I would be gone for more than four of them.

In short, it wasn't going to be the day my son had imagined.

After the other kids left for school, he sat next to me at my desk for a while before I left. I showed him some of what I do online and answered 20 interview-style questions about my career, which he recorded on a worksheet.

But then I had to go.

This particular kid is our middle kid. He's easygoing and doesn't ask for a lot. He's also very tenderhearted, although he often tries to cover

it up. I worry that he pushes his feelings down—that he’s storing more than he speaks.

As I drove away from the house, I felt like I was *swimming* in guilt.

Logically, I knew he was okay at that moment. He’d literally told me he’d be just fine, hanging out with the dog, eating snacks, and working on his report. I promised that I’d FaceTime him while I was out and that I’d record a podcast episode later that afternoon so he could watch.

But oh my goodness, I could not shake the guilt.

So while I drove, I tried to identify the sentences in my brain that were causing the guilt and shame, and I found them:

The first was “He asks for so little, and I couldn’t even manage *this*.”

The second? “If you’d gotten this on the calendar, you wouldn’t be in this situation.”

And the third, which came quickly behind it, was, “Why are you so spacey? You always miss stuff.”

That day’s job-shadowing situation just happened to hit on one of my shame triggers: that I’m not great with details.

Do you know *your* shame triggers?

## Knowing Your Shame Triggers Will Set You Free

Brené Brown defines shame as the intensely painful experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging. But I like to think of shame triggers as the things that hit a tender place—and are hard to shake.

One reason I recognized it the other day is that I just couldn't let it go. Usually, when I feel a pang of guilt or shame, I can pretty easily see where it's coming from and remind myself that I'm doing the best I can from moment to moment and that it's enough.

The other day, though, I could see where the shame was coming from, but nothing I told myself helped me release it. It had taken up residence in my body and I knew there would be no out-thinking it. That shame wanted to be felt—to be processed on its own timeline, not on mine.

But because I understood it—"Oh, this is hitting my 'I'm spacey' trigger"—I could make room for it. I could drop my resistance and trust that the shame would move through me when it was ready.

Because I could see it, it wasn't as scary.

Do you think of yourself as any of these?

- Unorganized

- Forgetful
- Indecisive
- Too loud
- Too quiet
- Uninteresting
- Introverted
- Too small, physically or metaphorically
- Too large, physically or metaphorically
- Inflexible, not easygoing enough
- Selfish
- Under-qualified
- A procrastinator
- A starter, not a finisher

Do any of these descriptors hit a tender place for you? Those might be your shame triggers.

## Your Shame Triggers Have an Origin Story

When I think back on my life, I can see experiences that created—or at the very least, contributed to—my shame triggers.

For example, the “I’m so spacey” trigger: At least twice, as a newly licensed driver, I locked my keys in the car—while it was running. Another time, I set my purse on top of my car and then drove away a bit later. My parents had to help me search for loose items from my purse on a freeway on-ramp. A pair of broken sunglasses here, a cracked tube of lip gloss there.

In my adult life, I’ve forgotten to put important things on our family calendar, I’ve ruined clothes because I didn’t pay attention to washing instructions, I’ve missed jury duty, and I’ve forgotten to call people when I said I would.

Over time, these experiences—and the (often well-meaning) criticism I’ve gotten from the people in my life—have built up my story that I struggle with details.

Now that I know more and can zoom out from those experiences, I can see that, most of the time, things worked out just fine. I can see that the feedback I received from my parents, husband, teachers, or friends taught me how *they* prefer to do life—not necessarily how I need to do mine.

I internalized some “shoulds” that weren’t moral. They weren’t good or bad, right or wrong—honestly, they were just a preference.

On top of that, I internalized some beliefs about myself that weren’t necessarily true. At least, not in any provable sort of way. I mean, I forget some details, sure. But doesn’t everybody? And I manage to keep track of a *lot* of other details.

Seeing all of this is helping me slowly strip away the shame over what I’ve always thought of as my weaknesses.

### **What to Do the Next Time You’re Triggered**

So the next time you’re triggered—the next time something hits a tender place for you—what can you do? How can you get back to a place of calm?

Try these steps:

1. Identify the belief you have about yourself that’s causing the shame. To find it, it may help to use the phrases “I’m too \_\_\_\_\_,” “I’m not \_\_\_\_\_ enough,” or “I never/always \_\_\_\_\_.”
2. Ask yourself these questions:
  - a. How did I pick up this belief?

- b. Is it even true? As in, irrefutably true? What evidence can I find for it not being true?
- c. Do I want to keep giving this thought so much weight?

I believe these questions will help you gradually detach from self-beliefs that aren't serving you. And in the meantime the shame that takes up residence in your body won't be so threatening, because you will understand it.

Imagine living in a world where fewer things trigger you. Picture your internal narrative after you've made peace with the thoughts that stir up shame within you.

It's not the kind of work we can do in an afternoon. (I wish it were!) It may take decades, but I can't think of many things that will settle our souls more than this work.

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[Erica Layne](#) is a podcast host, mom of three, bestselling author of *The Minimalist Way*, and founder of The Life On Purpose Movement. She helps women build their lives on what they value most, so they can let the rest slip away—guilt free.

# 3 Simple Ways to Worry Less: Gray Hairs Should Come from Wisdom, Not Stress

*Tanya Dalton*



My kids like playing video games on the big TV in our living room. I would tell you that it drives me crazy with the volume turned up way too loud and the way it transforms our upstairs into a cacophony of shouts and ear-splitting sound effects.

But honestly I love it.

It gives me a chance to be inside their teenage world and to sit on the periphery of what interests them. So I'll often find myself perched on the arm of the couch just watching, asking a lot of questions and somehow finding myself getting sucked into the storyline.

It's not a waste of time; it's an opportunity to connect with my almost-grown-up kids and to feel like we are playing the game together.

So that's how we found ourselves a few weeks ago—panicking while doing our best to avoid a horde of zombies. Luckily we stumbled into an abandoned garage, which *just happened* to have a crossbow leaning against the wall. No arrows, mind you. Just the crossbow.

Now, in real life, if I was scraping by trying to not get bitten by a zombie shambling by, I wouldn't have picked up the crossbow. You know why? No arrows (*obviously*). But when you play a video game

and you find a crossbow, somehow you just know that you're going to stumble upon a cache of arrows very soon.

And sure enough, we did.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we lived a little like we do in video games? That when we find a crossbow we trust in the world enough to know that the arrows will be appearing sometime in the near future.

...Or that when we have a tough decision, somehow it will lead us where we need to go.

...Or that when we make a mistake, somehow it's going to be for the best.

Wow, that would really help us worry a lot less. Wouldn't it?

But the truth is, life actually is a bit like a video game. No zombies, thank God, but when things happen to us, we can either say our life sucks and stress and worry about it, or we can believe that the universe really does have our back.

The secret is changing the way we think.

**What's Your Thinking?**

You know how magazines often have some kind of quiz about your relationship style or your summer style? Well, it should be no surprise that we all have worrying styles. Here's a few:

*Black or White:* Looking at things as all or nothing, with no gray area. "If I don't land this client, I'll never get a promotion."

*Overgeneralizing:* Letting a single negative experience taint your view of everything else. "I didn't get the job. No one will ever pay me what I'm worth."

*Negating the Positive:* Making up reasons why positive events don't count. "I did well on my last presentation, but that was just dumb luck."

*The Psychic:* Jump to conclusions without actual evidence. You act like a mind reader: "I can tell she secretly hates me." Or a fortune teller: "I just know something is going to go wrong."

*Catastrophizing:* Always expecting the worst-case scenario to happen. "The pilot said there will be some turbulence. The plane's going to crash!"

*Stealing Responsibility:* Assuming responsibility for things that aren't really yours or are outside your control. "I just know my daughter is going to get in an accident. I need to constantly track her on my phone."

Any of those ring a bell? I used to be a chronic worrier, so I'd say most of those were ringing bells for me! I really resonated with Negating the Positive and Stealing Responsibility.

The good news is that once you understand your thinking, it's easier to change it. Especially when you use one of these three methods:

### **1. Get to the heart of it.**

Is the issue you're worrying about solvable or unsolvable? In other words, is it really something you can control?

*Productive, solvable worries* are those you can take action on right away. For example, if you're worried about losing your job, you could start beefing up your resume and LinkedIn profile.

*Unproductive, uncontrollable worries* are those with no true corresponding action, like "What if I get cancer someday?"

If it's a solvable worry, a good first step is to brainstorm a few simple things you can do to take action. Set a timer for 10 minutes and list what would help to make the problem feel easier. Then choose one of the smallest ones to start with—get a little momentum going.

And, truthfully, even a lot of uncontrollable worries—like “What if my kid gets into an accident?”—can have micro actions that you take. You can have conversations about always wearing their seat belt, you can make sure they understand road safety when it’s rainy, and you can make sure they have a first-aid kit in their car.

You can set them up for success, but at some point you have to let them out into the wild, wild world. (Said by a mom whose son just finished traveling solo through Europe!)

The truth is, most of our worries stem from one main thought. Like with that boy of mine who has now traveled the world.

I wish he could find some kind of job he loves to do.

I wish he could see himself the way I see him.

I wish he felt more confident in his abilities.

All those worries, disguised as wishes? They’re all the same thing. There’s really only one thing I want (something I already knew!). I want my kid to be happy.

Happiness.

It’s really that simple.

And once I realized that, helping him became easier. After all, we both wanted the same thing.

## 2. Focus on today.

Time is one of our biggest stressors. There's never enough time, especially when you are cramming your day filled to the brim. In my book *The Joy of Missing Out* I share one of my favorite productivity truth bombs: *It's not about managing our time; it's savoring the moments.*

We have a tendency, though, to get caught up in two places: the past and the future. We ruminate on the past and all the things that didn't go well. Then we worry about the future and all the things that *might* not go well.

And what happens is that we just plain forget about *today*.

We have to decide what we want instead of treating our to-do list like it's a Saturday morning at Costco—a sampling smorgasbord of junk that doesn't really bring us joy. Did you really want that free sample of freezer-burned vegan hot dogs dunked in Kirkland ketchup followed by the jalapeño-flavored gut-cleanse drink and then topped off with a mini chocolate mint caramel éclairs? I don't think so.

This feels like an easy choice for me.

But that's what we often do with our day. We just take what it gives us and we shoe-horn it into our day. What if we decided instead to make the most of our time? What if we choose to stop rushing and jam-packing our day and just be in the present moment?

Let go of the past and all that ruminating. Release the future and all those fears circling in our heads. Choose to be present and be available for today.

### **3. Get comfortable with a little uncertainty.**

At the end of the day, we cannot control everything. I would say that I wish I could, but I'm actually glad I can't. My glimpse at my life timeline is limited to where I stand today and everything that happened before this moment. I have a very limited view of my life's arc. And that's a good thing. Life is more fun with a few surprises.

I mentioned that I used to be a chronic worrier; my days never felt calm because I was always pumping cortisol through my veins. I used to worry and stress about doing things "right." I would sit on the edge of my bed, with elbows on my knees, palms facing up, begging God to help me get on the right path.

I worried and stressed that I was doing everything all wrong. (*Do you ever feel that way?*) I just knew that I must be doing something wrong—that I'd made a wrong choice or I'd not done enough. The worry piled up on me like the rush-hour traffic on a Friday afternoon.

And then one day a quiet voice in my head said: *Stop. You have it all wrong. You are trying to control the path. You are straining and stretching yourself, trying to make that path straight, but the path is yours no matter what it looks like. All the twists? All the turns? That is your right path.*

It was like receiving permission to not have it all figured out. I felt a weight immediately lift from my shoulders as I realized I didn't have to know the path. I just had to trust it.

And that's when I changed my practice. I still sit on the edge of the bed, elbows on knees, palms facing up, but now I imagine I'm holding a beautiful wooden tray in my hands. And as I look at that imaginary tray, I place upon it my racing thoughts. I start piling up all my worry right on that wooden surface. I lay out my what-ifs and my could-have-beens and I watch them pile up high.

Then I outstretch my palms and I literally hand that tray over to the higher power. You can call it God. You can call it the Divine or Source or the Universe—it doesn't matter. But that one simple act gives me the grace to be imperfectly human. I know I am cared for and I know

I am loved even when my path is rocky and crooked. And I know I'm not supposed to have all the answers.

It's true, the universe does have my back.

And that helps me worry a whole lot less.

...

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# Everything Is Urgent (and Nothing Is)

*Oliver Burkeman*



There's no more common complaint about how we spend our time than that we invest too much time in what's urgent instead of what's important. And the "tyranny of the urgent" is more than a simple matter of getting our priorities confused. For me, at least, "urgency" is a whole state of mind and of body. It's the anxious knot in the stomach, the clenched jaw, the furrowed brow.

When I'm in the grip of urgency, life becomes a grim and unrelenting matter of "getting through" tasks, getting them "out of the way," putting real life on hold until they're completed. And certainly, abandoning any thought of *actually enjoying things* until the urgent matters are decisively off my plate.

And then there's the element of the urgency mindset that manifests as self-reproach—the tetchy inner critic, berating me for having neglected the tasks in question to the point where they became urgent in the first place.

The usual advice, when it comes to dealing with the urgency-versus-importance dilemma, mainly just involves trying to do more of the important stuff and less of the urgent.

Sometimes the advice is even to develop a sense of urgency around the important things, which to those of us in the knot-in-the-stomach camp has got to be one of the least appetizing productivity tactics ever devised. You want me to *increase* the number of things

I'm feeling stressed about, as a way of dealing with an overwhelming to-do list?

I'd like to propose a radically different sort of solution. What if, on closer inspection, urgency isn't what it seems? What if urgency doesn't even really exist?

### **How Important Is It...Really?**

The first and most obvious sense in which urgency isn't what it seems is that virtually none of the things that generate that knot-in-the-stomach feeling are the matters of life or death that we tend to assume. By the strictest definition of the word *need*, they don't actually need doing before other things. Astonishing as it can seem to the people pleasers of the world, replies to text messages usually *can* be delayed; deadlines *can* be missed; commitments *can* be flaked on.

It's not that there won't be any consequences to this kind of neglect. There will be. And it's certainly true that those consequences may be much worse for some people than for others, depending on your situation. But the malevolent force we call "urgency" wants you to think that the fate of the universe rests on each and every one of them. And it never does.

Contrast these feelings of urgency with the radically different experience of an *emergency*, in which you simply do, unquestionably, have to rush someone to the hospital, stop the water leaking from

your bathroom to the kitchen below, or get the company website back online as fast as you can. You'd think those moments would be stressful. But they're often characterized by a strange degree of calm, perhaps because there is suddenly zero conflict about how you ought to be using your time. You're doing the only thing you should be doing with that portion of your time on the planet.

And yet there's something even stranger going on with urgency.

### **Time Sensitivity Is Just One Factor**

Consider the famous "Eisenhower matrix," popularized by Stephen Covey, which is usually represented as a two-by-two grid. Importance runs along one side, and urgency along another, so that each of the four boxes represents the four kinds of tasks: urgent and important, non-urgent and important, urgent and non-important, and non-urgent and non-important.

Obviously, nobody should be spending any time on tasks that are neither urgent nor important. And we're constantly advised to spend more time on tasks that are important but non-urgent—because they're the ones that really matter, yet we're unlikely to be prodded into taking action on them by any sense of urgency. According to Covey, it's another quadrant of tasks—the urgent but non-important—that dominates far too much of our time.

But hold on a second. What does “urgent but non-important” even *mean*? How can something need doing quickly if it doesn’t really need doing at all? If it doesn’t need doing, it’s not urgent. And if it does need doing, then in some sense, at least, it’s important.

This confusion is reflected in the usual advice about what we should do with these urgent but non-important tasks, which is that they ought to be delegated to others.

Well, okay, yes, some tasks are better passed on to other people to complete. But delegation isn’t always an option. (We don’t all have large teams of staff to assist us—and certainly not at home.) And besides, if a task is truly unimportant, it’s not clear why anyone is doing it anyway.

The way through this muddle begins, I think, by seeing that what we call “urgency” is actually best understood as just another *kind* of importance. It’s not some separate, stress-inducing quality that attaches itself to certain tasks, demanding that we complete them immediately. It’s just that time sensitivity is sometimes one of the factors that can make a task worth prioritizing.

Deadlines do matter, whether you’re paying a bill, launching a product, buying a birthday present, or leaving for the school run. But time sensitivity is just one factor among many. There’s no need to think of urgency as some kind of uniquely powerful force that gets to muscle its way in front of everything else.

If this strikes you as a purely conceptual distinction, with no real day-to-day ramifications, I can only respond that for me it has been transformative.

## **So Much Matters**

The realization that time sensitivity is just one kind of importance helps me see the truth of my situation. Namely, every day, when I wake up, there are thousands upon thousands of genuinely important ways I could spend my day—and certainly incalculably more of them than I’ll ever have time for.

So much matters! Meaningful work matters. My relationships with my wife and son and friends matter. Paying the bills matters. Cleaning the house matters. Rest matters. Fun matters.

Somehow the overwhelming number of things that matter has the effect of cutting “urgency” down to size for me. Because I am finite, my job for the day can only possibly ever be to do a few things that matter. Inevitably, a far greater number of *other* things that matter will fall by the wayside, doubtless including a few “urgent” tasks that derived their importance from being time sensitive.

## ***Your* Priority May Not Be *My* Priority**

I have also begun to see how frequently my sense of what’s urgent is really a matter of someone else’s priorities or anxieties. Too often, my

unquestioned assumption is that, because someone else would like something done soon, that means I must do it soon. But that just doesn't follow.

I'm not claiming that other people's priorities don't count at all; it's just that they need not obliterate all other considerations. They can be weighed in the balance.

And sometimes someone else's disappointment, or their continued impatience at my failure to take action on something, may be a price I decide is worth paying. I'd rather my coworker wasn't irritated at waiting a day longer for the documents I'd promised, but maybe, in my specific case and on this specific occasion, spending bedtime with my son is what I choose instead.

## **Surrender to Win**

Perhaps another way of saying all this is that, from a certain angle, isn't *everything* time sensitive?

You get about four thousand weeks on the planet, if you're lucky. And so in fact a hike with an old friend, or an hour with a good novel in front of a fire, is as urgent a potential use of today as anything could be. Soon enough the opportunity for you to do such things will be gone forever.

And if it's *all* time sensitive, the stomach-knotting power of the stuff that normally gets classified as “urgent” fades a bit, doesn't it?

Clearly, getting all the time-sensitive things “out of the way first” is impossible. And clearly, you'll be going to bed tonight with a million important things not done. Okay. Great! With that battle decisively lost, there's no need to fight it anymore. Instead, you get to ask: what might be an interesting, useful, and enlightening way to spend these hours?

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# Quick, Join the Slow Movement

*Carl Honoré*



Every parent knows that children like bedtime stories read at a gentle pace. But I used to be too fast to slow down with the Brothers Grimm. I zoomed through the classic fairy tales, skipping lines, paragraphs, sometimes whole pages. My version of *Snow White* was so fast it had just three dwarves in it. “What happened to Grumpy?” my son would ask.

Then, one day, I caught myself eyeing up a collection of one-minute bedtime stories—yes, *Snow White* boiled down to 60 seconds. My first thought was *Wow, what a great idea. I need to get that book right now from Amazon, with drone delivery!*

But then I had a second reaction that stopped me in my tracks. I thought, *Whoa, has it really come to this? Am I really in such a hurry that I’m prepared to fob off my little boy with a sound byte instead of a story at the end of the day?*

It was a moment of searing epiphany. Almost an out-of-body experience. I suddenly saw myself in sharp relief, and what I saw there was ugly and unedifying: I was racing through my life instead of living it.

Thankfully, I never bought the fast fables. I did the exact opposite: I slowed down—and along the way became a voice of what has come to be known as the Slow Movement.

Don't worry, though: I'm not a slowness fanatic. Faster is often better—we all know that.

The Slow philosophy means doing everything at the right speed—fast, slow or whatever pace works best. Musicians call this the tempo *giusto*, the correct tempo.

Drill a little deeper, though, and you realize that Slow is actually a mindset. It means putting quality before quantity. Being mindful and present. Giving each moment the time and attention it deserves. Keeping a calm head when all about you are losing theirs.

Ultimately, Slow means living life rather than rushing through it.

## **Living in a Fast World**

We desperately need a Slow revolution because the virus of hurry has infected every corner of our lives. These days, many of us work, drive, talk, think, and eat too fast. Rather than read, we skim, scroll, or scan.

We also make love in a hurry. One mainstream magazine recently featured the following headline: “Bring Her to Orgasm in 30 Seconds!”

We even try to speed up things that are designed to shift us into a more mindful mode. Witness the rise of speed yoga and drive-thru funerals.

And just when you thought things couldn't get any faster, along comes artificial intelligence, promising to perform legions of tasks at superhuman speed.

Living in fast forward takes a heavy toll. Your health, diet, and relationships suffer. You make mistakes at work. You struggle to focus, relax, enjoy the moment, or even get a decent night's sleep. All this rushing around is also bad for the environment.

The good news is that the Slow Movement is growing—and fast.

## **Momentum Builds for Slowing Down**

Millions are now taking a less hurried approach to food, and eating better as a result. Look at the rise of farmers' markets, organic agriculture, and home cooking, or the renaissance of artisan bread, cheese, and beer.

Slowing down can also work wonders in the bedroom. We laughed when Sting raved about romping Tantric-style for hours on end, but

couples of all ages are now flocking to workshops to learn the art of unhurried lovemaking.

Millions are tuning their bodies and minds with slower exercise (think yoga, tai chi, and SuperSlow weightlifting) and slower forms of medicine (think acupuncture and massage).

Around the world, more than 260 official Slow Cities are now putting quality of life ahead of sprawl.

In the same vein, there is a growing push to let children slow down. Unstructured time helps them recharge and reflect, and teaches them how to socialize and think creatively. That's why schools are trimming the homework load and parents are cutting back on extracurriculars. A Harvard dean sent a letter to all incoming freshmen extolling the virtues of doing less and chilling more. The title: "Slow Down."

And the list goes on. There are now thriving movements for Slow Travel, Slow Fashion, Slow Gaming, Slow TV, Slow Journalism, Slow Leadership, Slow Retail, Slow Design, Slow Radio, Slow Finance, Slow Blogging, Slow Politics, Slow Art, Slow Media, Slow Reading, Slow Management, and Slow Architecture.

In all these movements, young people play a key role, belying the myth that slowing down is just for older folk. Today, college students across the world are studying every aspect of the Slow Movement.

Rather than embrace the workaholism of earlier generations, young people today are demanding or designing careers that let them slow down and enjoy life. As I type these words, #snailgirl (an homage to living at a gentler pace) is trending on TikTok.

Bottom line: people of all ages are waking up to a simple yet counterintuitive truth: in a world addicted to speed, slowness is a superpower.

## Slow at Work and Play

Even in the workplace, where the veneration of speed runs deep, the old canard that faster is better is coming under review. Many companies now encourage their staff to shift down a gear or two from time to time in order to boost health, happiness, communication, accuracy, creativity, strategic thinking, and productivity. Some do this by promoting meditation or napping. Others are embracing a four-day workweek.

A survey by *The Economist*, the in-house bible for entrepreneurial go-getters, ended with a perfect précis of the Slow creed: “Forget frantic acceleration. Mastering the clock of business is about choosing when to be fast and when to be slow.”[\[1\]](#)

The same goes for technology.

The speed of our gadgets is wonderful, but being always on is not. That's why the operating systems on phones and computers now come with tools to help users spend less time gazing at screens. It's also why more and more of us are doing digital detoxes. Many countries, from France to Ireland to Australia, have passed laws giving their citizens the right to ignore work calls or messages outside normal office hours. Together, these efforts add up to what is now called—you guessed it—the Slow Technology movement.

New social rituals are also springing up to help us unplug. One example is “stacking,” which works like this: When a group of friends go out for a coffee or a meal, they all pile their phones up in a stack in the middle of the table. Whoever caves first and grabs their device, to check Instagram or send a message or whatever, pays the bill for everyone.

It's a nifty way of saying: *We have this moment here together. We will never have this moment again. Why spoil it by trying to be in several other moments at the same time?* Translation: *Let's slow down and make the most of now.*

So ignore the sultans of speed who warn that putting on the brakes means ditching your career, tossing the smartphone, and moving to a commune. Taking a slower approach to life does not mean withdrawing from the world but rather experiencing it more vividly. As Mae West observed, “Anything worth doing is worth doing slowly.”

## Transformed by Slowness

Even as the world wakes up to the joys of putting on the brakes, and the taboo against slowness wanes, we face the same underlying problem. Namely that the global economy is built on a toxic cocktail of fast growth, fast consumption, and fast profits. To create a genuinely Slow world means devising an economic system that is humane, fair and sustainable. A tall order, to be sure, but one that more and more of us are working toward.

It helps that slowing down pays handsome dividends. I am a case in point.

Though I still love playing fast sports and living in a fast city, I am no longer a round-the-clock roadrunner. Instead, I seek the right tempo for each moment.

Of course, I'm not a perfect paragon of slowness—who is? I still have moments of pointless haste, but they are rare nowadays. I am well and truly back in touch with my inner tortoise!

This has made me more relaxed, dynamic, and creative. I feel closer to my friends and family and more able to enjoy each moment. I'm living my life now instead of racing through it.

And I'll tell you what: *Snow White* is a lot more fun with all seven dwarves.

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# Happily Living 24/6 in a 24/7 World

*Tiffany Shlain*



In these challenging days, we are all looking for ways to feel calmer.

Fifteen years ago, I leaned deeply into a tradition from my own ancestry that created one sacred day that turned off everything I needed less of (the outside world and all of its pings and notifications) and turned on the inside world. It lets me spend the day in my home and in my mind, reading, sitting around the table with people I love, walking in nature, thinking in a focused way, journaling, eating good food, being more present for the people (and animals) in my life, and appreciating everything around me. It is drawn from the ancient Jewish idea of Shabbat, a weekly day of rest.

For me, that means no screens—a tech Shabbat. In the ambush of things coming at you 24/7 (texts, notifications, stressful headlines, etc.), this simple ancient practice creates one day that is different: screens off, reflection on.

I like to call it living 24/6.

### **Practicing Tech Shabbat as a Family**

In 2009, after a period of dramatic events in my life, when my father died and my daughter was born within days of each other, I realized that you had better be present for this life you are living, because you can go at any moment. Keeping that reality right next to you is actually a great motivator. The crystallization of that fact after my father's death, and this new life in our home with my daughter

Blooma, inspired me to create time and space for myself and my family, to think and be in an uninterrupted way. So we started unplugging from sundown to sundown each Shabbat.

When our children were young, we did it all together as a family. Now that one daughter is out of the house in college and the other one will go soon, living 24/6 is still my steady ritual that keeps me balanced in this 24/7 world. It's a special, different day for me and my husband. I also think it baked deeply into our kids in their formative years. It has been the single most transformative practice I have ever done.

One day each week, we turn off all screens and we fill our time with things we love. We have a big meal with family and friends on Friday night. It's a special meal with homemade challah, a tablecloth, and flowers. We light candles. On Saturdays, we journal, we spend a lot of time in nature, we cook, read, go for bike rides ... and sometimes we just nap and do nothing. It has completely changed our lives and gets better the longer we do it. It's our favorite day of the week.

### **Try It and See What It Does for You**

Whenever people ask me, "How are you able to do all the things that you do?" I have a simple answer. This ancient practice keeps me balanced and creates space for my most creative thinking of the week, with no distractions. When I plug back in, I feel supercharged for this modern unrelenting world.

Technology Shabbat is not about what we give up but what we gain when we establish a healthy balance with technology. Here are some ways unplugging for one day a week will benefit your mental health.

*1. You'll be happier and less anxious.*

A recent study found “both liking others’ content and clicking links significantly predicted a subsequent reduction in self-reported physical health, mental health, and life satisfaction.”[\[1\]](#) Staying offline—and away from social media especially—makes you feel more optimistic and satisfied with your life.

*2. You'll feel better.*

You’ll be more active, you’ll spend more time outside, you’ll get more sleep—all of which translates to better health. Spending less time on your phone reduces the chances of developing repetitive stress injuries like “text neck.”

*3. You'll improve your relationships.*

When you’re not on your phone all the time, you can pay attention to the people you care about. And you’ll probably care more, too. Research suggests that smartphones are disrupting the ways we connect with others.[\[2\]](#)

*4. You'll form healthier habits.*

If you feel like you're hooked on your phone, it's because you are. Screens can be just as addictive as narcotics and can affect the brain in some similar ways. Unplugging once a week helps break these patterns.

5. *You'll be more focused.*

A recent study demonstrated that just having your phone nearby—even if it's switched off—makes you less focused.<sup>[3]</sup> Screens distract everyone in the room, even those who aren't using them.

6. *You'll sleep better.*

The blue light from screens tells the brain to stay alert, and can make it hard to fall asleep. Stay off your phone and laptop for an hour or so before bed to ensure you get the sleep you need.

7. *You'll get more done.*

Though it seems counterintuitive, research suggests working fewer hours can actually increase productivity. Companies that offer 32-hour workweeks, or 6-hour workdays, report both increased productivity and employee satisfaction.

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[Tiffany Shlain](#) is a multidisciplinary artist, Emmy-nominated

filmmaker, bestselling author, and the founder of the Webby Awards. Shlain's work explores ideas in feminism, philosophy, technology, neuroscience, and nature. Her awards and distinctions include selection by the Albert Einstein Foundation for their Genius 100 list, the Neil Postman Award for Career Achievement in Intellectual Activity, and inclusion in NPR's list of best commencement speeches. Shlain's book, *24/6: Giving up Screens One Day a Week to Get More Time, Creativity, and Connection*, received the Marshall McLuhan Outstanding Book Award.

# Rest Redefined: Understanding the 7 Types of Rest

*Saundra Dalton-Smith, MD*



Imagine a culture where high-achieving, hard-working individuals could operate at their best without constantly running on empty. That vision of well-being and vitality is possible, but only when we recognize the true power of rest.

Proper rest is not just about stopping or cessation. It brings restoration in seven key areas of life, each contributing to our capacity for resilience, focus, creativity, and joy. Real rest pours back into our places of depletion and corrects our rest deficits. So instead of saying, “I’m so tired,” start answering the question “What type of fatigue am I experiencing?”

Let’s take a look at each type of rest in detail, starting with one that’s often assumed to be the only type we need.

## **1. Physical Rest: More than Just Sleep**

Physical rest is the most obvious form of rest, yet it goes deeper than simply getting a good night’s sleep.

There are two primary forms of physical rest: passive and active. Passive physical rest includes sleep and napping—vital for cellular repair and rejuvenation. Active physical rest includes restorative practices like yoga, stretching, and massage therapy. These activities support the body by improving circulation, flexibility, and muscle recovery, leaving us feeling physically refreshed.

Our bodies require both passive and active forms of rest. Incorporating gentle physical activities into your day helps address tension and fatigue in ways that sleep alone cannot.

The ergonomics of your work area are also a part of addressing physical rest deficits. Do you experience neck or back pain after sitting at your desk for long periods of time? Are your legs swollen at the end of the day?

Pay attention to how your body responds throughout the day to different situations to counter the effects of poor circulation and a sedentary lifestyle.

## **2. Mental Rest: Quiet Your Overactive Mind**

Have you ever worked with someone who seems clueless, battles forgetfulness and irritability? Such a person may be in desperate need of mental rest. That same person may find they struggle with overthinking and decision fatigue.

Mental rest involves allowing space in your day to let your mind slow down. By clearing the mental clutter, you give your mind a chance to concentrate and refocus. Multitasking worsens mental rest deficits and can lead to increased errors in your work. Rather than downing another cup of coffee, taking a moment for a meditative or mindfulness practice may be the very thing needed to improve your mental clarity

Mental rest is for those who lie down at night, only to find their mind racing with unresolved thoughts from the day. Practicing flow-break cycles can help alleviate brain fog. Try scheduling five-minute breaks every two hours, jotting down thoughts in a notepad before bed, or doing an evening wind-down routine to calm the mind. These practices reduce cognitive overload and support mental clarity. They also prepare your mind for deeper, more restorative sleep.

Sleep and rest are not the same thing, but getting getting rest in the different areas can improve the quality of your sleep.

### **3. Sensory Rest: Downgrade the Overstimulation**

In today's hyper-connected world, sensory overstimulation is often unavoidable. Whether it's the bright screens of our devices, the background noise of a bustling office, or the endless notifications vying for our attention, our senses are constantly under assault. This type of overload can exhaust our nervous systems, leading to psychological responses such as irritability, agitation, and even anger.

Evaluate the sensory inputs in your environment and your natural response to stimulation. Those with ADD, ADHD, or neurodivergent classifications, or who consider themselves to be a highly sensitive person, will be more prone to sensory rest deficits.

Sensory rest helps us step back from this overstimulation. Consider closing your eyes for a minute midday, donning a pair of noise cancellation earbuds to combat the noise in your office space, or intentionally unplugging from electronics at night. You could dim the lights, choose quieter environments when possible, or take deliberate breaks from screen time.

Sensory rest empowers us to find peace and focus amid today's overwhelming sensory landscape, allowing our bodies to reset.

#### **4. Creative Rest: Find Inspiration and Wonder**

For those who solve problems or create regularly—writers, entrepreneurs, teachers, parents—creative rest is essential. Creative rest invites us to reconnect with awe and wonder, which is foundational to innovative thinking. Think of the last time you were mesmerized by a stunning landscape or moved by a powerful piece of music. These experiences remind us that creativity thrives not in nonstop productivity but in moments of genuine connection with beauty.

While oceans, mountains, and sunsets provide incredible opportunities for creative rest, you can also cultivate creativity by surrounding yourself with meaningful inspiration unique to you. Perhaps this means keeping a photo of your favorite vacation location on your desk, setting a drawing from your child as your

screensaver, or allowing for moments of quiet observation in a local park.

When we make space for creative rest, we fill up on inspiration and activate innovation.

## **5. Emotional Rest: Freedom to Be Authentic**

One of the most unacknowledged types of rest, emotional rest involves the freedom to express your emotions openly and authentically.

Imagine that friend who's always the one you call when you're in a bind—the one who says “yes” even when she wants to say “no.” She's always accommodating and rarely gets the chance to voice her own needs. She is lacking emotional rest.

Emotional rest requires us to be honest about our feelings, to step away from people pleasing, and to allow ourselves to be vulnerable without fear of judgment. This form of rest involves building supportive spaces where we can admit we're not always okay and release the weight of constant emotional restraint. Emotional rest allows us to feel deeply, helping us develop resilience, inner peace, and authenticity.

Emotional labor is the weightiness felt when you mask or hold back your emotions. Those who work in customer service experience this

when they respond to a yelling customer with calmness. Counselors and healthcare workers experience this when they navigate the painful experiences of those they support.

Many carry an unhealthy amount of emotional labor related to their profession. Although this is a normal part of the job, it must still be addressed or it can lead to an emotional rest deficit, resulting in compassion fatigue, depression, or emotional burnout.

Seek the rest of disclosure with a trusted counselor, therapist, or friend.

## **6. Social Rest: Life-Giving Connections**

Closely tied to emotional rest, social rest addresses the need for nourishing relationships. It's not just about being around people; it's about being around the right people—the ones who give energy instead of only taking it. A social rest deficit happens when we are in relationships that drain us rather than revive us.

To cultivate social rest, we need to spend more time in relationships that pour into us. This could mean surrounding ourselves with uplifting friends, family, or colleagues and being mindful about choosing people who bring positivity.

Even if you're only able to connect virtually, be intentional about being present in those conversations. Turning on your camera and

actively engaging can foster deeper connection and meaning, even in a digital space.

Whether you identify as being an introvert or an extrovert, we all need life-giving connections.

## **7. Spiritual Rest: Reconnect with Purpose**

This final type of rest goes beyond our mental and physical experience and touches the very core of who we are.

Spiritual rest isn't necessarily just about religion. It's about finding a sense of connection, meaning, and purpose that transcends the daily grind. Those who experience spiritual rest feel grounded in love, acceptance, and a deep-seated understanding of belonging.

Spiritual rest can be achieved through practices that connect us to something greater than ourselves, such as prayer, meditation, or community involvement. For some this means engaging with a faith community, while for others it might involve immersing in nature or supporting a cause they believe in.

Spiritual rest offers the fulfillment of knowing that our lives matter and that we're contributing to a bigger purpose.

## **Why Understanding the Types of Rest Matters**

Imagine trying to recharge your phone by plugging it into the wrong outlet. The same holds true for our bodies, minds, and spirits; they each require a specific form of rest to recharge fully.

Rest is complex and multifaceted. It's important you get the type of rest you need to restore the places where you are experiencing a rest deficit. Each type of rest restores us in unique ways. Only by understanding your specific rest needs can you address your exhaustion holistically.

Visit [RestQuiz.com](https://RestQuiz.com) to identify your own rest deficits. Do you need more emotional rest to feel authentic in your relationships, or are you craving mental rest to regain your focus and clarity? Perhaps creative rest feels most missing in your life, and it's time to reconnect with what inspires you.

By approaching rest intentionally and embracing these seven forms of restoration, you can recover your life from burnout, renew your energy, and restore your sanity. Rest is not just a luxury—it's a necessity for anyone desiring to live their most productive and most fulfilling life.

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# Real Strategies to Help You Calm Down

*Courtney Carver*



You know what never helps me to calm down? When someone says, “Don’t get so upset,” or “It’s not as bad as you think,” or the worst: “Calm down!” In fact, telling me to calm down when I’m not feeling calm feels dismissive; it almost always irritates me a little. We can’t calm down on command as if we aren’t having real feelings.

I realize that when people tell us to “calm down” it’s usually because they don’t want to see us suffer. They want the best for us. Even still, finding our own ways to self-soothe is always more effective.

It may take a little time, but when we find ways to come back to calm, we can restore and renew, building strength and resilience. What we need is less of people telling us how to feel and more real strategies to soothe our nervous systems. These strategies work for me. I’ve been practicing them for a long time.

### **1. Recognize what is not up to you.**

Note to self (and anyone who needs this loving reminder): we can’t control everything. Identify what is within your control and what is not. Then, for less stress, stop trying to make the things that are not in your control change in some way. It’s not up to you.

I know that things like the weather, and the expectations, opinions, and judgments from other people, are not up to me. And I know that what is up to me is how I respond to anything that is not up to me. I can respond in my own way, on my own time, which sometimes

means not at all or in a way that might not be satisfying to others. Learning this has been a gift to my nervous system and has allowed me to take better action and to make a difference in ways I could not before.

For more peace, be gentle as you decide how, when, and if you react.

## **2. Go to bed.**

Seven or eight hours of sleep on a consistent basis will help you regulate your nervous system and better manage the stress in your life. Give yourself a bedtime, and honor it by going to bed on schedule, at a similar time each night. For extra credit, give yourself a big buffer between food, alcohol, and screens and the time you go to bed.

Sleeping well may be the most important thing you do. There will be seasons of life that are more stressful than others and times when stress gets the best of us. That makes it even more meaningful to protect our peace and to stress less where we can.

## **3. Be selective about how you spend your time, energy, and attention.**

Even though your schedule is different, or you have no schedule at all, you still get to be selective about how you spend your time, energy,

and attention. Is it going toward fear or love? Are you spending it on what you care most about right now?

So much may feel out of your control, but you still have agency over where these precious resources are going. When you feel overwhelmed, check in. Are you spread too thin? Are you trying to care about too many things at once? Give yourself room on your calendar, in your day, and on your mind.

#### **4. Leave space in between everything.**

I used to neglect to make space in between things, in the name of getting it all done. Now I know that the rest, breath, noticing, and healing that happen in between positively impact how I feel, treat people, and do my work.

Instead of filling up all the spaces in the name of productivity or trying to get it all done, embrace extra space. It's yours. You need it. You deserve it. When an appointment cancels, or something falls off your to-do list, instead of replacing it, take the space for yourself.

#### **5. Trade perfection for practice.**

Instead of striving for perfection or being the best, acting like you've got it all figured out or trying to do it all, just practice.

Practice ...

- being gentle with yourself and others.
- taking care of yourself and others.
- feeling your feelings.
- losing it altogether and coming back to yourself.
- setting boundaries around how much news you let in.
- choosing how much energy you want to expend.
- finding your way.
- trusting yourself.

All the challenges, fears, and hard things you've gone through and overcome were practice for this very moment. There's no being perfect in practice, no competition, no comparison, and no guilt ... just noticing, learning, and growing.

## **6. Remember that there is a fine line between being informed and being overwhelmed.**

Whenever I share that I'm taking a break from the news, someone always tells me that it's important to stay informed. I agree. Kind of. It is important to stay informed, but not on an hourly basis or even a daily basis. It's also important to consider *how* you are informed. I

don't *watch* the news or news clips or videos shared online; I *read* the news and choose what I let into my heart and soul and how I let it in.

If you are feeling overwhelmed, take a break from the news, social media, and the Internet whenever you want. Being uninformed for a period of time allows you to feel the way you want to feel instead of living in a reactive state 24/7.

### **7. How something ends up never depends on how much you worry about it.**

Worry never works. Let your worries go. It won't be easy, but do it anyway. Write them down, walk them off, shift your thoughts, and keep letting it go. And then do that again and again and again.

### **8. Solve the little problem before the big one.**

Often, when we are struggling with a big problem, we try to push through and figure things out. In the name of being proactive, we consider all the what-ifs and the worst-case scenarios and the zillion options available. We stay up at night worrying about the outcome.

Instead of trying to figure everything out from that sleep-deprived, pushed-through-and-came-up-empty state, try solving a little problem first. Are you thirsty? Drink water. Are you sore? Go for a walk. Are you too overwhelmed to meal-plan? Order food delivery.

## **9. If it's too heavy, put it down.**

Let's drop the "no pain, no gain, push through at all cost" narrative. It's not working.

When it's too heavy, put it down. Take a break when you need one. When you need to rest, rest. Later you can decide if you want to pick it up again, ask for help carrying it, or let it go. Trade pushing through for resting through, for easing through, and for taking care of you all the way through.

## **10. Stop trying to "get there" so you can be here.**

Where you are right now is where you are. You aren't behind. You aren't caught up. You are here, and it's all you really get. I know this is obvious, and yet still we spend so much time and energy and heartache trying to "get there" that we often forget we are here. We are here in this fleeting moment and we never really get to be anywhere else.

When you find yourself striving to catch up or struggling because you feel like you are behind, be here for a moment. This is it.

If we want to be calm, we need to give ourselves permission to be gentle, slow, and soft, to rest when we want, to turn down the noise and find the ground beneath our feet. We need it not only when we are overwhelmed but always. Making time for this is the way back to

listening to yourself, to trusting yourself, to getting your life back. Start small with moments and minutes and let the practice grow at a pace that works for you.

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