

IMPORTANCE OF TAKING BREAKS



WELLNESS OBSERVANCES

NATIONAL PARK & RECREATION MONTH

UV SAFETY MONTH

**JULY 10-16: EVERYBODY DESERVES A
MESSAGE WEEK**

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Newsletter Created By:
Jordan Simone
COTA/L, CHC, RYT-200
ACM JIF Wellness Director

Why are Breaks IMPORTANT?

Taking breaks throughout the workday has benefits for both the employee and the organization, but many employees often neglect to take them.

WHY TAKE A BREAK?

Taking a break from work increases focus when employees return to work, thus improving their productivity. Additionally, taking breaks relieves some stress, which helps employees' mental health and well-being. These factors contribute to increased job satisfaction.

SHOULD EMPLOYERS ENCOURAGE BREAKS?

When supervisors or the organization promoting healthy habits during breaks encourages employees to take the time to make a healthy lunch or go for a walk.

Perhaps the strongest encouragement for employees to take breaks: their supervisor taking breaks themselves. If employees' supervisors take breaks themselves, then employees know that it is okay to take breaks and they will not be penalized for it. Many employees have a preconceived notion that taking a break lowers their productivity or suggests they are not committed to their job. Supervisors taking breaks models positive workplace behavior, encouraging employees to follow suit.



NOT ALL BREAKS ARE CREATED EQUAL:

Employees tend to choose breaks that often do not work to their benefit. Some of the most popular breaks—like having a snack, drinking caffeine, or venting about a problem—are actually associated with more fatigue. This is because employees turn to these activities when they are already tired as a way to cope. Plus, these breaks are hardly addressing the underlying reasons for fatigue.

One key component of an effective break is psychological detachment, which refers to mentally disengaging from work thoughts. By shifting our focus, detachment helps us to directly reduce work demands that are causing fatigue and to naturally recover. Some types of breaks help us to avoid these work-related thoughts better than others.

The Benefits of TAKING BREAKS

1. MOVEMENT BREAKS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR YOUR PHYSICAL & EMOTIONAL HEALTH

The benefits of taking brief movement breaks have been well-researched. Constant sitting—whether at your desk, the TV, or the lecture hall—puts you at higher risk of heart disease, diabetes, depression, and obesity. Getting up from your chair to walk, stretch, do yoga, or whatever activity you prefer can reduce the negative health effects from too much sitting. Just a 5-minute walk every hour can improve your health and well-being.

2. BREAKS CAN PREVENT "DECISION FATIGUE"

Author S.J. Scott points out that the need to make frequent decisions throughout your day can wear down your willpower and reasoning ability. Citing a famous study, Scott notes that Israeli judges were more likely to grant paroles to prisoners after their two daily breaks than after they had been working for a while. As decision fatigue set in, the rate of granting paroles gradually dropped to near 0% because judges resorted to the easiest and safest option—just say no. Decision fatigue can lead to simplistic decision-making and procrastination.

3. BREAKS RESTORE MOTIVATION, ESPECIALLY FOR LONG-TERM GOALS

According to author Nir Eyal, "When we work, our prefrontal cortex makes every effort to help us execute our goals. But for a challenging task that requires our sustained attention, research shows briefly taking our minds off the goal can renew and strengthen motivation later on." A small study summarized here even suggests that prolonged attention to a single task actually hinders performance. "We propose that deactivating and reactivating your goals allows you to stay focused," psychology professor Alejandro Lleras says.

4. BREAKS INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY & CREATIVITY

Working for long stretches without breaks leads to stress and exhaustion. Taking breaks refreshes the mind, replenishes your mental resources, and helps you become more creative. "Aha moments" came more often to those who took breaks, according to research. Other evidence suggests also that taking regular breaks raises workers' level of engagement which, in turn, is highly correlated with productivity.

5. "WAKING REST" HELPS CONSOLIDATE MEMORIES & IMPROVE LEARNING

Scientists have known for some time that one purpose of sleep is to consolidate memories. However, there is also evidence that resting while awake likewise improves memory formation. During a rest period, it appears that the brain reviews and ingrains what it previously learned. "Downtime replenishes the brain's stores of attention and motivation, encourages productivity and creativity, and is essential to both achieve our highest levels of performance and simply form stable memories in everyday life ... moments of respite may even be necessary to keep one's moral compass in working order and maintain a sense of self."

Why Eat Lunch

AWAY FROM YOUR DESK

“It might seem like a good idea to sit at your desk and get through your emails during lunch,” Scheller said. “But by stepping away and taking time to give yourself a bit of a break, you’re going to improve your productivity later on. Ideally, 30 minutes to an hour is a good time to step away. We tend to really burn out when we don’t give ourselves those forced pauses.”

PROMOTES MINDFUL EATING

“Unconscious eating is eating without giving much thought to the physiological cues that we may pay attention to when we are sitting at the dinner table and having a meal,” said Leanne Redman, the associate executive director for scientific education at Pennington Biomedical Research Center. “We are not paying attention to cues about satiety. We are more likely to eat more quickly and not feeling full.”

PROVIDES A BREAK FROM BLUE LIGHT

Scheller specifically mentions the stress hormone cortisol, which may already be elevated during stressful times like the coronavirus pandemic. According to many studies, prolonged exposure to the blue light emanating from all sorts of screens — from computers to tablets to phones — drastically increases the stress hormone’s levels in our body. Stepping away from your work station will therefore prevent another trigger that’ll raise your stress levels.

HELPS INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY

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PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY FOR SOCIALIZATION

The ability to socialize during lunch shouldn’t be overlooked, either. In regular times, a break would give employees the ability to socialize, a psychological necessity for all humans. Needless to say, our need to actually see and interact with other people — at a safe distance and with a mask on, of course — has been compounded during these unprecedented times.

How to INCORPORATE BREAKS



Here are some guidelines on how to take a break and get the most out of the time away from work. First, do an activity that uses a different part of the brain than was being used for work. This allows the part of the brain that was being used to rest. Deactivating then reactivating the part of the brain that was being used resets the brain's ability to focus and pay attention, resulting in improved mental focus when employees return from their breaks

WALK OR EXERCISE

Many famous writers were also famous for their walking prowess, as described in this blog by PT blogger Linda Wasmer Andrews. Andrews cites work by Stanford researchers who studied the link between walking and creativity. They discovered that a walking break led to more creative ideas than a sitting break. The creativity afterglow lingered even after the subjects returned to their desks.

CONNECT WITH NATURE

Do you need calm or excitement in your day? Describing a study from Scotland, Wasmer writes that “that walking on a nature path induced a calm state of mind, while walking along city streets amped up engagement.” Know what state of mind you are aiming for when you take breaks.

CHANGE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Briefly leaving your work environment and going to another area will serve to help your brain rest and switch gears.

MEDITATE

Mindfulness meditation offers a temporary respite from goal achievement. Ferris Jabr offers an interesting perspective here: “For many people, mindfulness is about paying close attention to whatever the mind does on its own, as opposed to directing one’s mind to accomplish this or that.”

GET CREATIVE

If your work requires you to use your logical, linguistic left-brain, deliberately choose a break activity that will activate your creative and visual right-brain—like drawing or just doodling.

Mindful Moments

4-7-8 BREATHING EXERCISE TO LET GO OF STRESS & ANXIETY



Nourish

VEGETABLE COUSCOUS SALAD

<https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/vegetable-couscous-salad/>



ingredients

- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1/3 cup balsamic vinegar
- 4 teaspoons capers, drained
- 4 teaspoons lemon juice
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 3/4 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1-1/4 teaspoons minced fresh rosemary or 1/2 teaspoon dried rosemary, crushed
- 1-1/4 teaspoons minced fresh thyme or 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 2 medium zucchini or yellow summer squash, halved lengthwise
- 2 medium sweet yellow or red peppers, quartered
- 1 Japanese eggplant, halved lengthwise
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1 cup grape tomatoes, halved
- 1/2 cup Greek olives, pitted and sliced
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh parsley or 1 teaspoon dried parsley flakes
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh basil or 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 package (10 ounces) uncooked couscous

recipe preparation

- In a small bowl, whisk the first 10 ingredients. Refrigerate until serving.
- Cook couscous according to package directions. Meanwhile, brush the zucchini, yellow peppers and eggplant with oil; sprinkle with salt and pepper. Grill, covered, over medium heat until crisp-tender, 10-12 minutes, turning once.
- Chop grilled vegetables; place in a large bowl. Add the tomatoes, olives, parsley, basil and couscous. Pour dressing over salad and toss to coat. Serve warm or chilled.