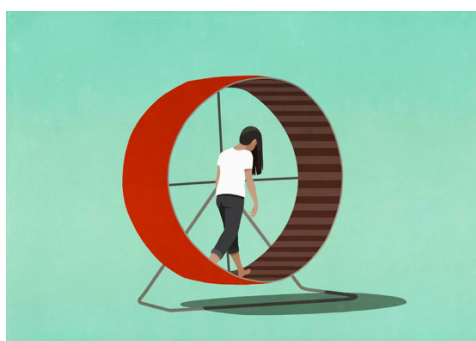


Forbes article written on the work of Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith and her book *Sacred Rest*.

Rest Deprivation Is Real —Here's How To Beat It

Experts break down the hidden cost of rest deprivation and why sleep alone cannot fix it.

By [Noma Nazish](#), FORBES Aug 11, 2025, 02:41pm EDT



Feeling exhausted despite getting enough sleep? You may be rest-deprived.

Many of us equate the word “rest” with “sleep.” While sleep is important, it's only one part of the picture. Different stressors deplete different systems in your brain and body.

[Dr. Anoopinder Singh](#), a board-certified psychiatrist, explains, “Sleep may relieve physical fatigue and restore cognitive function, but it doesn’t fully resolve emotional exhaustion, decision fatigue or sensory overload. That’s why it’s possible to feel tired or sluggish even when you’re getting enough sleep. “One of my clients once said to me, ‘I sleep eight hours a night, but I’m still exhausted.’ They weren’t sleep-deprived, they were rest-deprived,” says [Brie Scolaro](#), New York City-based licensed therapist. “Once we layered in mental, sensory and emotional rest with small things like tech-free evenings, mindfulness breaks and honest conversations, they didn’t just feel less tired, they felt more alive,” Scolaro adds.

Rest is about recharging the whole person—not just one aspect of the mind or body—through intentional disengagement from stressors, stimuli, distractions and demands, says [Dr. Mark Kovacs](#), performance physiologist and fellow of the American College of Sports Medicine.

How To Get The Rest You’re Missing

In her book *Sacred Rest*, internal medicine physician and researcher Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith outlines the seven types of rest we all need to recharge in different ways. Here’s the scoop on what they are and how to practice them.

Physical Rest

Physical rest includes both active and passive rest. Passive rest involves minimal to no physical activity (e.g., sleeping, lying down or sitting still). It gives your body time to fully relax and repair itself. Meanwhile, active rest includes gentle movement (like yoga, walking and stretching) to increase blood flow, release tension and speed up recovery, explains Dr. Kovacs.

Mental Rest

Mental rest is about giving our brains a break from the constant thinking, decision-making, planning and problem-solving we do every day. It's about stepping out of the "doing" and into "being" so you can feel recharged and ready to get back to "doing" again, says [Alyssa Kushner](#), a licensed therapist specializing in anxiety and relational trauma. Taking screen-free breaks, practicing mindful breathing, going for gratitude walks and spending time in nature are all examples of mental rest. According to Dr. Singh, overlooking mental rest can cause [cognitive fatigue](#), leading to brain fog, poor decision-making, irritability and increased stress.

Sensory Rest

Sensory rest involves limiting the overwhelming sensory input we are constantly exposed to. Think bright screens, flashing lights, loud noises, pinging notifications and strong scents. Simple practices like dimming lights, using Focus mode on your phone, reducing background noise and decluttering your surroundings allow your nervous system to downregulate, preventing sensory overload that can manifest as irritability, difficulty concentrating, anxiety or feeling "on edge" all the time, explains [Brianna Paruolo](#), a licensed mental health counselor.

Creative Rest

Creative rest is about intentionally stepping away from tasks that need focused effort and giving yourself permission to experience beauty, awe and joy without the pressure to achieve something. "That might be walking without a destination, reading poetry, going to a museum, free coloring or drawing or just [letting yourself daydream](#)," says Kushner.

"Creative rest restores our capacity for brainstorming, lateral thinking, and finding inspiration," says Dr. Singh. Without creative rest, we risk losing our ability to think flexibly, even if we remain "productive" on paper, he adds.

Emotional Rest

Emotional rest helps us restore the energy we spend regulating, supporting and responding to emotional situations like comforting a friend, dealing with difficult conversations or processing our own emotional responses. It includes practices that promote deeper relaxation and emotional balance, such as [grounding exercises](#), mindfulness meditation, journaling, emotional check-ins and setting boundaries. Without emotional rest, we become emotionally dysregulated, which can show up as mood swings, impulsiveness, avoidance, having shorter fuses and emotional fatigue, says Paruolo.

Social Rest

Social rest is about doing whatever you need to do to recharge your social batteries. "It's essential for preventing social burnout that comes from constantly code-switching and managing different social expectations," Paruolo explains. It could mean limiting interactions that leave you drained, taking social media breaks, hanging out with people who don't require effort to be with, or spending time alone without the pressure to engage or respond to others.

Spiritual Rest

Spiritual rest involves connecting to something greater than ourselves, whether through prayer, meditation, connecting with nature or community service to find a sense of fulfillment and peace, says Dr. Kovacs. It's whatever helps you understand your place in the world and find meaning in your experiences. Studies on older adults with chronic illness suggest prioritizing spiritual well-being can [increase resilience](#) and [act as a buffer against anxiety](#).

The more intentional you are about incorporating these forms of rest into your routine, the better you recover.