



📄 1 min • Chill

## Do less to do more

The power of breaks to fuel your creativity

You already know that constant "busyness" feels draining, but did you know it can also stifle your creativity? Taking time away from work or tasks isn't just a nice to have, it's essential for sparking fresh ideas and boosting your mental clarity.

### The Science

Giving your mind downtime and a chance to wander, helps with information processing. Have you noticed how great ideas can often pop into your head when you're not thinking about anything in particular?!

Making time for mental rest is crucial for creative thinking and problem-solving.

Here are 3 scientifically proven tactics you can try to change things up and give your brain a boost:

- **Find your focus time:** Do you feel more alert or creative at a particular time of day? Pay attention to when you feel most productive and try to schedule focused work during these periods. This way, you can make the most of your natural rhythms.
- **The power of breaks:** Short, regular breaks can work wonders for your brain. A nature walk, or even staring out of the window at trees, a hedge, or the lawn can refresh your mind and boost your creativity. If you can't get out, just move away from your desk and do some squats, or a few laps up and down the stairs. Prep some veggies for dinner, or read a chapter of a book. It all counts!
- **Reduce screen time:** No doubt you saw this tip coming. Schedule buffers of 15-20 minutes between online meetings. Leave your phone at your desk when you take your lunch break. Turn off notifications for set times of the day so you don't get caught out by those sneaky pings.

Doing nothing helps us do more. Embrace it for a while and see how it goes!

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## Are you putting your hobbies on hold?

Whether you've enjoyed a particular hobby for years, or you're learning something new, you know how great it feels to be interested, energised, and absorbed.

As your skills improve, you strengthen your brain pathways to expect positive outcomes, making you feel more optimistic and better about yourself.

In a nutshell - hobbies are enjoyable and good for you!

Despite knowing this, sometimes it can be a struggle to fit them into your busy life.

If you're time-poor, try these hobby re-ignition strategies:

### Track your time

Be really honest with yourself about what you're actually doing versus what you want to be doing. Where are the mismatches and what can you swap out?

### Set and uphold boundaries

Block time out of your calendar and make it non-negotiable. Start small, with 30 minutes twice a week and don't let yourself get double booked.

### Find time efficiencies

Is there a moment in the week when you can tag your hobby onto something you're already doing? For example, can you enjoy your hobby while your child is playing sports?

### Do what you can

Know that some weeks will be good, some will be great, and others will just be OK. But having an 'OK' week is always better than not committing at all!

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## The science of mindfulness

Mindfulness has been a buzzword for many years. In fact, for a while, its mainstream acceptance as a mental health panacea was outpacing the science and research around it.

Rooted in Buddhist thought and theory, Jon Kabat-Zinn was responsible for its popularity in the West from the 1970s, and since the early 2000s, mindfulness has been studied more rigorously.

If you've been thinking about trying some mindfulness techniques, here's a breakdown of what it is, how it affects wellbeing, and why it could be a good option for you.

### What is mindfulness

The practice of mindfulness involves directing all your attention to the present moment and your state of mind. You might choose to concentrate on your breath, how something feels in your hands, or the sounds around you. When you notice your mind wandering, without judgement, bring your attention back to your chosen focus.

### How it works

Directing your concentration towards one thing helps you quiet your mind from distracting and possibly negative thoughts. Breathing more deeply and slowly activates your parasympathetic nervous system which reduces your heart rate, blood pressure, and cortisol levels. Psychological scientists have found that mindfulness changes activity in brain regions linked to attention and emotional regulation.

### Why you should try it

Practising mindfulness encourages a mental state of calm concentration. It improves attention and emotion regulation, and mindfulness-based therapy has been proven to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. Chronic pain sufferers have found relief from fatigue, stress, and pain, while other studies indicate regular practice can improve our immune system and aid in faster cold or flu recovery.

### It's OK if mindfulness doesn't work for you

For some people, mindfulness can exacerbate anxiety. If you notice that mindfulness practices are heightening anxious or stressful thoughts, try active relaxing instead – such as listening to music while cooking dinner, or playing an instrument.

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## Sleep and diet

A bad night's sleep of less than 6 hours can increase insulin resistance, making it difficult to get energy into our cells. This feeling of fatigue can lead us to reach for highly processed grab-and-go options which provide a short-term boost followed by a rapid blood sugar and energy level crash. As well as craving high-fat and sugar foods, we get more pleasure from them as lack of sleep heightens our brain's feedback and reward circuits.

If you've had a poor night's sleep, some gentle cardio exercise and a protein-filled brekkie can help get you back on track.

Sleep plays such a vital role in many metabolic processes, meaning that chronic, long-term poor sleep can lead to a higher risk of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and overall early mortality.

### Diet and sleep

There are things we eat or drink that we know aren't conducive to a restful night's sleep which is OK! However, if you are concerned about your sleep health, take a look at these common suspects to see if you can tweak anything in your diet that might improve your zzzzzz's.

- Too much alcohol, or alcohol close to bedtime can affect your sleep cycles.
- Not enough calories or carbohydrates can cause blood sugar to drop in the evenings. This spikes stress hormones which can wake you up early (hello 3 am!).
- Large amounts of highly refined carbohydrates and not enough protein and fat have the same effect on blood sugar and stress hormones.
- Low iron levels can affect brain function and lead to restless leg syndrome.
- If you drink tea or coffee, go decaf if bedtime is in the next 6 hours.
- Avoid heavy meals and spicy or hot foods before going to bed.

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