

The Benefits of Relaxation?

1. Mayo Clinic, *Relaxation Techniques*

When faced with numerous responsibilities and tasks or the demands of an illness, relaxation techniques may not be a priority in your life. But that means you might miss out on the health benefits of relaxation.

Practicing relaxation techniques can have many benefits, including: Slowing heart rate; Lowering blood pressure; Slowing your breathing rate; Improving digestion; Maintaining normal blood sugar levels; Reducing activity of stress hormones; Increasing blood flow to major muscles; Reducing muscle tension and chronic pain; Improving concentration and mood; Improving sleep quality; Lowering fatigue; Reducing anger and frustration; Boosting confidence to handle problems...

2. Jordan Rosenfeld, *I kicked my smartphone addiction by retraining my brain to enjoy being bored*, Quartz 7/4/17

Indeed, research suggests that people who want to come up with creative ideas would do well to let their minds drift. A 2014 study in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* found that bored people “are more likely to engage in sensation seeking”—that is, to look for activities or sights that engage their minds and stimulate the brain’s reward centers. These people are more prone to “divergent thinking styles”—the ability to come up with creative new ideas. “Thus, boredom may encourage people to approach rewards and spark associative thought.”

In another recent study, researchers at the University of Central Lancashire set out to test the link between boredom and creativity. They asked 80 participants to perform boring tasks like copying and reading numbers from a phone book and then to drum up as many possible uses for plastic cups as they could. The groups that completed the boring phone book tasks beforehand came up with more creative answers than the control group that had not.

3. Pirkei Avot 3:4

Rabbi Chanina ben Chachinai said: One who is awake at night, and one who walks alone on the road, and one who clears his heart for emptiness, this person makes himself liable for his life.

4. Otzar Midrashim, Midrash Asarah Harugei Malchut

And then they brought out Rabbi Chanina ben Chachinai. That day was Friday, and for his entire life he had fasted, from the age of twelve until he was ninety-five years old. His students said to him, “Our master, do you wish to taste anything before you are killed?” He replied, “Until now I fasted, not eating and not drinking; now, when I don’t know which way I will go, you tell me to eat and drink?” He began to recite Kiddush...

5. Rashi (11th century France), Commentary to Avot 3:4

One who is awake at night - And he thinks empty thoughts in his heart. For emptiness – To be empty of words of Torah.

6. Midrash, Avot d’Rabbi Natan II 34

Rabbi Chanina ben Chachinai said: One who is awake at night... He must only be involved in words of Torah, Proverbs 6:22 says, “When you walk, it will lead you.”

Defining Our Problem

7. HealthlinkBC, *Stress Management: Relaxing Your Mind and Body*

To relax means to calm the mind, the body, or both. Relaxing can quiet your mind and make you feel peaceful and calm. Your body also reacts when you relax. For example, your muscles may be less tense and more flexible.

8. Mayo Clinic, *Types of relaxation techniques*

Types of relaxation techniques include:

- Autogenic relaxation. Autogenic means something that comes from within you. In this relaxation technique, you use both visual imagery and body awareness to reduce stress

- Progressive muscle relaxation. In this relaxation technique, you focus on slowly tensing and then relaxing each muscle group. This can help you focus on the difference between muscle tension and relaxation...
- Visualization. In this relaxation technique, you may form mental images to take a visual journey to a peaceful, calming place or situation...

Other relaxation techniques may include: Deep breathing, Massage, Meditation, Tai chi, Yoga, Biofeedback, Music and art therapy, Aromatherapy, Hydrotherapy

9. Exodus 31:17, as explained by Rashi

Between Me and the Children of Israel, [Shabbat] is a sign forever, for in six days Gd created the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He halted and rested.

10. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (Rambam, 12th century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Laws of Traits 3:3

One's goal should be to have a complete and strong body so his spirit will be straight, in order to know Gd.

11. Rabbi Yaakov Baal haTurim (13th-14th century Germany, Spain), Tur Orach Chaim 306

A person cannot possibly finish all of his tasks in one week; rather, he must see himself as though his work is complete by every Shabbat. There is no greater pleasure.

12. Rabbi Elazar Pappo (18th-19th century Bulgaria), Pele Yoetz **ישוב הדעת**

A settled mind is highly necessary for involvement in Torah and service of Gd, and especially for those like us, orphans of orphans whose heart is absent, and any distraction at all suffices to distract us from serving Gd. It is appropriate to flee mightily from scattering of the spirit, meaning scattering of his wealth and similar commercial distractions. Better to have dry bread and tranquility than a distracted heart and perpetual pain and fear.

13. Rabbi Yosef Karo (16th century Israel), Code of Jewish Law Orach Chaim 38:9

One who is in pain, or whose mind is not settled, is exempt [from tefillin], for one may not turn his mind from them.

14. Don Isaac Abarbanel (15th century Spain), Maayanei haYeshuah 11:2

Stand straight, with a settled mind, for this cannot be grasped by beasts or confused people.

15. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (Rambam, 12th century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Laws of Traits 3:3

One who follows a healthy lifestyle is not following a good path if his goal is only to have his body complete, and his children doing his work and supporting him.

16. Rabbi Menachem Meiri (13th century France), Commentary to Avot 3:4

Clearing one's heart for emptiness means not involving himself in anything, which can lead to a slumbering heart and desolate thoughts.

17. Talmud, Berachot 63b

How do we know that Torah endures only in one who kills himself for it? "This is the Torah: When one dies in a tent." (Numbers 19)

18. Pirkei Avot 2:15

Rabbi Tarfon says: The day is short, and the work is great, and the workers are lazy, and the pay is great, and the Employer presses.

19. Midrash, Mechilta d'Rabban Shimon bar Yochai 20:9

"Six days you shall work" – Rebbe said: This is another decree; just as Israel is instructed in the commandments of Shabbat, so they are instructed regarding work. Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah said: Work is great, for the *Shechinah* was not manifest upon Israel until they worked, as Exodus 25:8 says, "Make a Sanctuary for Me, and I will dwell among

them." Rabbi Akiva said: Work is great, for one who benefits a *perutah's* worth from sanctified property brings an offering and pays its value and an extra 1/5 and brings a korban worth two *se'la*, but workers handling sanctified property are paid out of the half-*sheke*/contributions...

Competing Values

20. Mishnah Ketuvot 5:5

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said: One who vows that his wife may not work must divorce her and pay her ketubah, for idleness leads to *shiamum*.

21. Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, *The Emergence of Ethical Man* pg. 5

G-d takes man-animal into His confidence, addresses him and reveals to him His moral will.

22. Dr. Viktor Frankl, *Psychotherapy and Existentialism*

The spiritual crisis of retirement constitutes, so to speak, a permanent unemployment neurosis. But there is also a temporary, periodical one, the Sunday neurosis: a depression which afflicts people who become conscious of the lack of content in their lives - the existential vacuum - when the rush of the busy week stops on Sunday and the void within them suddenly becomes manifest.

23. Robert Wolcott, *Laziness, Technology And Brain Scanning A Billion People: A Conversation With David Krakauer*, Forbes 7/31/17

Krakauer underscores another underappreciated threat we all face: Humans are lazy. Technology makes life easier, allows us to experience and accomplish more.... "What I worry about almost more than anything else is a certain kind of mental laziness, and an unwillingness to engage with the difficult issues..."

24. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (19th century Germany), *Collected Writings VIII* pg. 259

I almost believe that all you homebodies would one day have to atone for your staying indoors, and when you would desire entrance to see the marvels of heaven, they would ask you, "Did you see the marvels of Gd on earth?" Then, ashamed, you would mumble, "We missed that opportunity."

25. Rabbi Yosef Karo (16th century Israel), *Code of Jewish Law Orach Chaim* 231:1

Eating or drinking for your own pleasure is not praiseworthy. One should intend to eat and drink in order to live, to serve the Creator.

26. Rabbi Shimon Shkop (19th-20th century Eastern Europe), *Shaarei Yosher*, Introduction

In my humble opinion, this mitzvah [of "You shall be holy"] includes every foundation and root of the purpose of our lives, for all of our work and struggle to be dedicated continually for the good of the community, that we not use any deed or action, benefit or pleasure without some element of benefiting others... And when one straightens his path and yearns continually for the paths of his life to be dedicated to the community, then whatever he does for himself as well, for his physical and emotional health, is also associated with this mitzvah of holiness, for through this he also helps the community, for by helping himself he helps the many who need him.

27. Numbers 28:26, Deuteronomy 16:8

[Re: Shavuot] It will be a celebration for you...

[Re: Passover] ...and on the seventh day shall be a celebration for HaShem your Gd...

28. Talmud, Beitzah 15b

Rabbi Yehoshua said: Split it, half for Gd and half for you.