

Notice Mind-Body Rest – Lab



Based on mindfulness approaches developed by Shinzen Young.



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Learning to Stay

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*Notice more.
Struggle less.*

"People travel to wonder at the height of the mountains, at the huge waves of the sea, at the long course of rivers, at the vast compass of the ocean, at the circular motion of the stars; and they pass by themselves without wondering."

~ St. Augustine

Noticing Rest in the Body and Mind

You can focus on restful states in the body and mind in order to...

Increase your general level of concentration power

The more continuously you concentrate on restful states the better you feel, motivating you to concentrate even more continuously. This clever strategy creates a positive feedback loop that revs up your concentration power. Thus Easy Rest is an easy way to get a sense of what a highly concentrated state tastes like. As you become familiar with that, you'll find that you can get the same taste during other endeavors such as study, work, interpersonal relationships, exercise, sports, music, lovemaking, prayer and so forth.

Deal with physical discomfort

Focusing on restful states such as Blank and Relax creates a container of equanimity. Within that container physical discomforts (pain, fatigue, heat, cold, sleepiness, hunger...) can come and go with less "stickiness" and hence less suffering. Even though you are not paying attention to the discomfort you are still processing it and purifying consciousness. The main factor that breaks up blockages is equanimity, and you're using the restful states to induce equanimity.

Deal with emotional discomfort

The concept here is essentially the same as that for physical discomfort. Emotional discomfort arises through one or a combination of bothersome images/negative talk in your mind combined with unpleasant feel flavors in your body (i.e., body sensations of anger, fear, sadness, shame, impatience, disgust...). Just as in the case of physical discomfort, even though you are focusing away from the sensory challenge you are still reducing suffering through the power of equanimity. It requires (and thus creates) a lot of equanimity to let a "Feel-Image-Talk storm" play itself out without needing to do something about it.

Feel good

Cultivating the restful states allows you to have a source of sensory satisfaction that is available anytime you want, no matter what your situation may be.

Weaken urges that lead to behaviors you regret

When the urge to do an undesired behavior (overeating, use a substance, procrastinate on a responsibility...) comes up you can weaken its power by focusing away from it on to the restful states. The idea is to keep focusing on the relaxation and blankness and derive fulfillment from them until the urge passes. If you do this consistently enough, the urge will eventually lose its power over your life. So Easy Rest is not just a way to feel good subjectively, it's also a way to improve how you behave objectively.

Manage stress

Focusing on restful states is an obvious way to dissipate stress and prevent things from building up during your day. It's a systematic and efficient way to briefly chill out whenever you want.

Deal with difficulty sleeping

Many people have difficulty getting to sleep, staying asleep or getting good sleep. However, the real issue here is not actually getting a good night's sleep (losing consciousness for the night). The real issues is getting a good night's rest (whether you lose consciousness or not). Noting Relaxed and Blank will allow you to get a deep, refreshing and satisfying night's rest, whether or not you actually fall asleep. Paradoxically, as you focus on enjoying the Blank and Relaxation and worry less about getting to sleep, you may find that you end up actually falling asleep!

Get a "power rest"

Noting Relaxed and Blank for a few minutes is a good way to get a quick recharge during the day.



The Easy Rest Technique

1. Start by placing some attention in the darkness/brightness in front of/behind your closed eyes and some attention over your whole body.

Then begin to note RELAX (any perception of bodily repose or muscle relaxation) or BLANK (the sense of darkness and/or brightness in front of or behind your closed eyes) or QUIET (a pause in verbal thinking regardless of how long it persists).

- If you're aware of some relaxation in the body, note RELAX.
 - If you're aware of some inactivity in visual thinking, note BLANK.
 - If you're aware of some pause between words in talk space, note QUIET.
 - If at any given moment, two or all three are available, just choose one to focus on. It doesn't matter which one.
 - Focus on that RELAX or BLANK or QUIET for a few seconds (unless it disappears immediately).
 - After those few seconds, note again either the same experience or a different one.
2. Let other things arise in the background if they wish.
 - As you note RELAX or BLANK or QUIET, other things (Touch, Feel, Image, Talk or Sound) may arise, perhaps quite intensely. That's perfectly okay. Let them arise but in the background of your attention while the foreground of attention is occupied by RELAX or BLANK or QUIET.
 - If you get pulled away into one of those distractions, gently return to the RELAX or BLANK or QUIET. Spoken labels may help.
 3. You can still focus on rest even when there is a lot of unrest.
 - Remember that to experience rest does not require that your body and mind be free from all discomfort, tension or agitation. You can have a lot of unrest in your mind and body and still be doing the technique perfectly!
 4. Remember you have options.
 - You can speak or think labels or note without labeling, whatever works for you in a given moment.
 - You can zoom in, zoom out or zoom both ways or not intentionally zoom, whatever works for you in a given moment.
 - You can intentionally restrict what you note to just one or two aspects or you can use the basic format of free floating between them.
 - You can create restful states by intentionally relaxing individual body parts to create local relaxation, or straightening up and settling in to create whole body relaxation. You can also experiment with slowly opening then closing your eyes to enhance the darkness/brightness.