



Navigating Relaxation Anxiety

Slowing down sustainably without the guilt

When we are used to constant movement, stillness doesn't always feel like peace—sometimes it feels like a threat. This worksheet is a tool to help you unpack why rest might feel uncomfortable and help you build a more sustainable relationship with downtime.

1. DECONSTRUCTING THE “REST GUARD”

When you finally sit down to relax, your mind might throw up roadblocks to get you moving again. Let's identify what your specific "rest anxiety" sounds like.

1. **The Internal Script:** When you try to rest (e.g., sitting on the couch, taking a quiet afternoon), what are the immediate thoughts that pop into your head? Check any that apply:

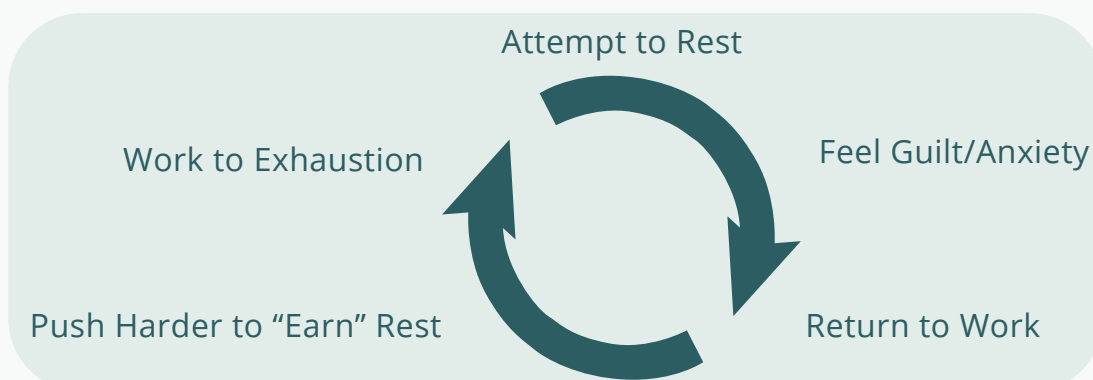
- ☐ I should be doing something productive right now.
- ☐ I haven't earned this yet; I still have things on my to-do list.
- ☐ If I stop now, I'm going to fall behind.
- ☐ I'm just being lazy.
- ☐ Other: _____

2. **The Underlying Emotion:** Staying busy often gives us a temporary sense of control. When the noise of daily responsibilities fades, what is actually waiting underneath the surface for you? (*Examples: anxiety about the future, self-criticism, a difficult emotion you've been avoiding, or just a general sense of unease*).

2. REDEFINING YOUR WORTH

We often tie our personal value directly to our output. To break the cycle of "earned rest," we have to actively rewrite our internal rules and put new boundaries into practice.

The Vicious Cycle of “Earned” Rest





Step 1: Rewrite Your "Rest Rules"

We carry unspoken rules about productivity that trigger our anxiety. Use the table below to identify one of your rules and actively rewrite it.

Old Rule (The Anxiety Trigger)	The Reality Check	New Rule (The Reframe)
<i>Example: "I can only sit down and watch a show once the entire kitchen is clean."</i>	<i>Keeping a perfect kitchen at the expense of my energy levels leads to burnout.</i>	<i>"Rest is a prerequisite for a happy home, not a reward for a perfect one. I can rest with dishes in the sink."</i>

Step 2: Establish Your "Buffer Zones"

Anxiety thrives when we transition instantly from high-speed productivity to dead stop. We need an actionable transition ritual to signal to our nervous system that it is safe to slow down.

Select one active boundary you will implement this week to protect your transition into rest:

- ☐ The "Devices Down" Boundary: I will put my phone/laptop in another room or on "Do Not Disturb" at least 30 minutes before I attempt to rest, so my brain stops searching for new tasks.
- ☐ The "Brain Dump" Release: Before sitting down to rest, I will write down every single lingering task or worry on a piece of paper to "park" them outside of my head.
- ☐ The "Physical Reset" Cue: I will change out of my work clothes, wash my face, or do a 2-minute physical stretch to physically signal to my body that the "work phase" of the day is over.
- ☐ Other: _____

3. INCORPORATING STILLNESS

If long periods of rest cause too much anxiety right now, the goal is to practice tolerating small increments of stillness.

Design a "Low-Stakes Rest" Experiment:

Pick one micro-action you can take this week to practice being still. Start small—even 5 to 10 minutes counts.

- *Examples: Drinking a morning coffee without looking at your phone; sitting outside for 5 minutes without a podcast; lying down after work before jumping into making dinner.*
- **My chosen micro-rest activity:** _____

Mindful Check-In:

After completing your "experiment," take some time to reflect:

- What uncomfortable thoughts or sensations came up?
- Can I acknowledge this discomfort as just a sign of "unfamiliarity," rather than a sign that I am doing something wrong?

The goal is not to eliminate your ambition or your love for structure. The goal is simply to create a relationship with rest where slowing down no longer feels dangerous. Moving forward sustainably requires recovery. You don't need to earn the right to breathe.