

How to Fix Feeling Exhausted

Many parents and kids are feeling exhausted these days. Between the effects of a prolonged pandemic and the pressure to be productive and adhere to an always-on mentality, many may feel on the verge of burnout. Most think the answer must be more sleep, but Dr. Saundra Dalton-Smith, a physician, researcher, TEDx presenter, and the author of the book *Sacred Rest: Recover Your Life, Renew Your Energy, Restore Your Sanity*, begs to differ.

Sleep, Dalton-Smith says, is not the same thing as rest. “We’re living in a culture of high-achieving, high-producing, chronically tired, and chronically burned-out individuals. Every activity we do requires energy, and it’s not all physical,” explains Dalton-Smith. In other words, we’re missing out on the *other* types of rest we need. According to Dalton-Smith, rest should equal restoration in many key areas of life:

Physical: Feeling tired can indicate a physical rest deficit. To replenish reserves, you can get more physical rest passively, through sleeping or napping, or actively, by doing restorative activities such as yoga and stretching, to improve the body’s circulation and flexibility.

Mental: People with a mental rest deficit can be irritable and forgetful, have difficulty concentrating on work, struggle to turn off their brains before bed, and wake up feeling like they never went to bed. To get more mental rest, try scheduling short breaks every couple of hours as a reminder to slow down and reset. At night, download racing thoughts onto a bedside notepad.

Sensory: If you are feeling Zoom fatigue, you likely need some sensory rest. Bright lights, computer screens, background noise, and multiple conversations can overwhelm your senses. To counter those effects, close your eyes for a minute in the middle of the day and unplug from electronics in the evening. When you intentionally deprive yourself of sensory inputs, you’ll begin to feel less stimulated and rested.

Creative: If you are solving problems or brainstorming new ideas, creative rest is needed to be inspired and innovative. Taking in the beauty of the outdoors tops off creative rest reserves by reawakening the awe and wonder we feel when we witness our surroundings.

Social: Make a conscious effort to surround yourself with positive, supportive people who encourage you and leave you feeling better than you did before your interaction.

Spiritual: If you’re feeling disconnected, alone, or lost, you might be deficient in spiritual rest, which is the ability to connect beyond the physical and mental and feel a deep sense of belonging, love, acceptance, and purpose. Add more prayer, meditation, or community involvement to your daily routine.

A deficiency in any of these types of rest can have unfavorable effects on your health, happiness, relationships, creativity, and productivity. But the good news, Dalton-Smith stresses, is that rest is the most underused, chemical-free, safe, and effective alternative therapy available to us. The key to feeling truly rested, she says, is to identify where you are using the most energy in your day and then directing attention to restoring those specific areas.

Source: Amy Blaschka, Contributor, Forbes.com