

Introduction

Many of us - especially women - are often told that we can have a successful career, a fulfilling family life, and a great social life. Society tells us that we can have it all, but the pressure of trying to do it all can be overwhelming! We become exhausted from constantly pushing ourselves to higher levels of performance. That's why it's important to recognize when it's time to take a break and give ourselves the rest we need and deserve.

In this episode of "Spiritual AF Sundays," we will explore what rest is - is it different from inaction? Did you know that rest can be a political act? We'll explain more about that. We'll examine why taking a break can be mentally and physically beneficial. We'll discuss tips on making sure you take the time necessary to recharge. Need some advice on setting boundaries to ensure you're taking care of your needs? We got you covered! Finally, we'll explore what drives us to take action in life - is it a desire for success or something else?

By the end of this episode, you'll have a better understanding of what rest is, why it's essential, and how to make it part of your life. You'll learn that taking a break doesn't mean that you're lazy or settling for less - instead, rest is an integral part of reaching your goals and success.

So join us to learn more about the importance of rest and how it can help you achieve your goals! Sit back with your favorite beverage and get ready for this episode of Spiritual AF Sundays: Finding Balance Between Rest and Action.

[Intro Music]

And welcome back. I'm Jessica, also known as The Mystic Geek, and today we're going to talk about finding a balance between rest and action.

You're probably going, "Jess, don't you think it's a little weird that we're only a week into the new year, and you're jumping in to talk about rest? Aren't we in motivational, "hustle" quote season for a few more weeks?"

Well, dear listeners, I hear you. But that's why I'm here to remind you - and myself! - that rest is just as important as action.

It's not an either-or situation; it's a both-and reality. We can only be successful by taking the time to rest and recharge our creative batteries. And we need to act if we want to see tangible results from our work.

So, let's start with the basics: what is rest? Let's take a look at what the dictionary has to say about this.

What is Rest?

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines rest as - okay; they have quite a few definitions, plus variances depending on whether you use the noun or verb version. Let's go with these two:

1. to cease from action or motion: refrain from labor or exertion; and
2. to be free from anxiety or disturbance

The second one hits home to me more because it reminds me of home life - my husband will tell me to take some time to rest. I'll be on my computer, looking at tasks and goals, saying I need to do this or that, but I'll tell myself that I'm resting because I'm not technically doing anything. After a few moments, I'll hear the hubby clear his throat, and when I look over at him, he'll say something like, "Dear, I told you to rest."

What I was doing was not resting. Proper rest is a time to take a break from everything and be free of the worries and stresses of life. It's a chance to unplug, reflect, and find peace of mind.

I'll admit it - I feel guilty if I'm not doing something or working on tasks. Like that adage - idle hands are the devil's playground.

But rest isn't just about being lazy; it's also about being mindful and caring for yourself. For example, some people think of rest as taking a nap or going on vacation, while others might find solace in listening to music or reading a book. Whatever helps you relax, that's rest.

So, why is rest important? Taking the time to recharge your mental and physical batteries can help you get shit done later on. Concentrating is easier if we take breaks, which often leads to burnout.

Rest can also positively affect your emotional well-being. Allowing yourself some time for self-care can help reduce stress levels and ward off negative feelings. Plus, having a balanced lifestyle can give you more energy so that you're not always dragging yourself through the day.

The act of resting is more than taking a nap or doing something that you enjoy. Resting can also be about setting boundaries and practicing self-care - saying no to invitations or activities that don't align with what you need, for example.

Now, this isn't to say that action is terrible. We need to take action to accomplish our goals. Activity helps us progress and makes our dreams a reality when we put in the effort.

But we risk burnout if we don't rest and keep on hustling. Rest helps give us the energy and clarity to retake action, ready to tackle whatever comes our way.

The Difference Between Rest and Inaction

So does that mean that rest is the same as not taking action? Not at all.

Inaction is the state of doing nothing when it comes to achieving a goal or taking any action in general. It's easy to fall into this trap because it requires less effort than actively pursuing something. However, it can be beneficial if you take action and make progress toward your goals.

A common way that inaction shows up is through procrastination. We all do it. We tell ourselves that we'll get to the laundry after we watch videos on TikTok, and then suddenly, an hour has gone by, and we've yet to make progress. Or we commit to writing a blog post, only to find ourselves scrolling through Pinterest for research.

It's okay to take a break; the critical thing here is knowing when to get back to work and recognizing when you're just using it as an excuse for inaction. We typically procrastinate when we're overwhelmed or uncertain about something, and it's a sign that we should step back and figure out what is preventing us from taking action.

In contrast with mindless inaction, rest is a conscious decision to take a break from action - not out of laziness or evading uncomfortable feelings, but out of necessity. Rest helps us recharge and gain perspective to be more productive when we return to action.

Rest is Resistance

Some people see resting as a political act, especially during the current climate that urges us to be productive, perform better, and do more.

Are you familiar with Tricia Hersey, the founder of [The Nap Ministry](#)? She encourages her followers to prioritize their needs and comforts instead of worrying about pleasing others. She's been featured in the New York Times ([The Nap Bishop Is Spreading the Good Word: Rest](#)) and NPR ([How to think about rest as a form of resistance](#)). She also published a book - [Rest is Resistance: A Manifesto](#) - I'll include a link to bookshop.org in the show notes, that way, you can snag a copy and support local bookstores and this podcast.

Hersey refers to rest as "resistance" because it requires us to challenge grind culture and instead prioritize our well-being. Being comfortable with resting instead of striving for constant productivity is a form of rebellion that could ultimately lead to a better quality of life. Rather than listen to me try and paraphrase her message, I recommend you look at her website and explore the concept further.

The Benefits of Rest

Earlier, we discussed how rest could help us recharge and benefit our well-being. How does that work, exactly? We must first examine how stress impacts us to understand the benefits of rest.

When we're overworked, tired, and overwhelmed, our adrenal glands - located on top of our kidneys - release a hormone known as cortisol.

Cortisol and adrenaline trigger our fight-or-flight response, designed to make us respond quickly to a threat. However, this reaction can be damaging if started too often or if we remain in that state for too long.

When we are constantly under stress, our bodies go into survival mode and put the brakes on nonessential functions such as digestion, reproduction, and growth. We have issues metabolizing the food we eat, our mental clarity and focus can decrease, and we may experience physical symptoms such as muscle tension, hair loss, or weight gain.

Weight can be a touchy topic for some, so it's okay if you want to skip a minute or so. So, back in the early 2000s, when I was working a full-time office job and a part-time retail job, I was solicited for the latest fad in weight loss pills - cortisol blockers.

The argument was that the body creates cortisol in response to stress, which causes weight gain. The salesperson could have encouraged me to find ways to reduce my stress. Instead, they tried to convince me that I needed to take pills to counter my body's normal response to an abnormal environment.

I don't remember if I took the pills. However, I want to share that there is a natural way of counteracting cortisol production and restoring balance - resting.

Rest helps us relax and take pressure off our adrenals so they can function properly again. Our body no longer has to maintain an ongoing "fight or flight" response, which means it can spend energy on other functions. Taking a moment to rest can help us become more mentally and physically balanced and reduce the effects of stress on our bodies.

In addition to helping balance cortisol levels, rest helps us recharge our mental energy to be more productive when we return to action. Resting allows our body to restore its energy reserves to tackle the tasks ahead. Many of us have experienced a situation where our efforts in action lack focus and effectiveness if we have yet to take the time to rest.

Taking a break can not be overstated, especially regarding managing cortisol levels. So make sure you're scheduling some time each day to do something that brings you joy and relaxes your body. A little bit of rest will go a long way in helping you stay focused and energized over the long haul.

How to Rest

We've discussed the importance of rest and how it helps us reduce stress, but what does that look like in practice?

First, it's important to recognize when you need a break. If you feel overwhelmed or experiencing physical symptoms like tension headaches, it's time to rest.

When taking a break, disconnect from work and commitments. Change your environment or activity. You could walk in nature, curl up with a book, or converse with someone close to you. The change of location and activity encourages a mental shift that keeps you from dwelling on stressful thoughts.

You can also try breathing exercises. Taking slow, deep breaths can help us become more mindful of our bodies and relax in the present moment. This technique can be done in any environment and helps create an immediate mental shift. There is some neat science behind this - breathing exercises stimulate the vagus nerve, which is responsible for calming down our bodies, reducing stress, and promoting all of those functions that cortisol shuts down.

Others might try to tap into your "you" time. Be firm and tell them that your time away is essential for your overall well-being. When setting boundaries with others so we can rest, it's vital to identify and communicate our needs. We can do so by being assertive about what we need from others, understanding how our behavior impacts those around us, and ensuring everyone is on the same page.

One way to start is to practice self-compassion. Sometimes we resist the need to rest because we feel guilty about not doing enough or feel overwhelmed with expectations. Before investing your time and energy in others, remind yourself of the importance of first taking care of yourself. Being kind and understanding to ourselves helps us accept our limitations, be honest with others about our needs, and make decisions that support our well-being - the perfect foundation for taking time out of action to truly rest.

Why Do We Take Action

Now that we've established the importance of maintaining a healthy balance between rest and action let's dive into what drives us to act.

For starters, motivation is vital in driving us to take action. Inspiration can come from internal (intrinsic) or external (extrinsic) sources. Intrinsic motivation is when we take action because it's personally rewarding. Examples include: mastering a skill, helping others, and challenging ourselves. Extrinsic motivation is taking action for rewards from someone else, such as recognition or money.

Our environment can also significantly impact our drive to take action. We're more likely to take action in a supportive and encouraging environment, while an unsupportive or competitive one discourages us from acting.

Finally, it's important to remember that taking action only sometimes means success. Taking risks is essential for growth and can lead to outstanding outcomes if we have the confidence and courage to go after them.

Conclusion

Understanding our needs and goals is the key to finding a happy balance between rest and action. Taking time for self-care is essential to maintain physical and mental health. At the same time, taking risks and investing in ourselves can help us reach new heights. Rest and action both have an essential role to play, and it's up to us to find the right balance.

By taking a step back, listening to our bodies, and being kind to ourselves, we can make decisions that support our overall health and well-being - allowing us to take action when necessary, rest when needed, and find a point of equilibrium.

Additionally, we must practice self-compassion and set boundaries with others to take time for ourselves without feeling guilty about not doing enough. By incorporating rest into our daily routines and being honest about what we need from those around us, we can stay energized over the long haul while also managing cortisol levels effectively. Rest is just as important as action - let's ensure we're making time for it.

Thanks for listening! Tune in next week on January 15th as we discuss the myth of "treat yourself" self-care. On January 22nd, we will explore submission and power through a spiritual lens.

Until next time, stay well and take care of yourselves! Seriously, that's a significant part of being Spiritual AF.

[Outro Music]