

Wellness: Sleep and Relaxation

Tips and Tools for Getting Proper Rest

The Importance of Sleep

Sleep is crucial for mental health as it plays a vital role in various cognitive functions and emotional regulation. Here is just a short list of everything that sleep does for us, and why it is so important!

- **Emotional regulation:** Sufficient sleep is essential for regulating emotions and processing emotional information effectively. Inadequate sleep can lead to heightened emotional reactivity, irritability, and difficulties in managing stress.
- **Cognitive function:** During sleep, the brain undergoes crucial restoration processes. Sleep is crucial for cognitive processes such as concentration, problem-solving, and decision-making. Inadequate sleep can impair cognitive function, leading to difficulties in memory retention, learning, and overall cognitive performance.
- **Mood stability:** Good sleep is linked to better mood stability and a reduced risk of developing mood disorders such as depression and anxiety. Sleep deprivation can contribute to increased vulnerability to mood disturbances and may exacerbate existing mental health conditions.
- **Stress reduction:** Quality sleep helps in lowering stress levels and promotes overall relaxation, which is essential for maintaining good mental health. Chronic sleep deprivation can increase stress hormones, leading to heightened anxiety and a compromised ability to cope with everyday challenges.

Tips for a Good Night Sleep

- **Establish a consistent sleep schedule:** Try, when scheduling allows, to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on days off and travel days. This helps regulate your body's internal clock and promotes better sleep quality. Consistency is key!
- **Create a bedtime routine:** Engage in relaxing activities before bedtime, such as reading, taking a warm bath, or practicing breathing or mindfulness exercises and techniques. A consistent wind-down routine signals to your body that it's time to unwind and prepare for sleep.
- **Create a comfortable sleep environment:** Make sure where you are sleeping is conducive to sleep by keeping it dark, quiet, and cool. This can be hard for a touring company who travels consistently, but it may be worth traveling with some staples, like a favorite blanket or pillow, to make sure you have familiar comfort on the road. A small white noise machine, ear plugs, and an eye mask are also portable options for ensuring a good sleeping environment.
- **Limit screen time before bed:** We've all heard this one before, and in this day and age, it can be so hard to put our phones down before bed, but so worth it! Minimize exposure to screens, including smartphones, computers, and TVs, at least an hour before bedtime. The blue light emitted by screens can interfere with your body's production of melatonin, a hormone that regulates sleep.
- **Be mindful of your diet and exercise:** Avoid heavy meals, caffeine, and alcohol close to bedtime. Additionally, regular exercise during the day can contribute to better sleep, but avoid strenuous workouts too close to bedtime.



Additional Resource

The Nap Ministry: The Nap Ministry is a prominent initiative that advocates for the importance of rest, particularly within marginalized communities, as a form of resistance and healing. Founded by Tricia Hersey, the Nap Ministry challenges societal norms that prioritize productivity and constant work, often at the expense of people's well-being.

The Nap Ministry encourages individuals to embrace rest as a radical act of self-care and self-preservation. It highlights the historical and cultural significance of rest within communities that have been systemically deprived of it. The movement emphasizes the importance of rest in combating the effects of systemic oppression, racial injustice, and the overall societal pressures that lead to burnout and exhaustion.

The Nap Ministry's message is not merely about physical rest but also about creating spaces for emotional and spiritual rejuvenation. By promoting the idea that rest is a form of resistance and a way to reclaim autonomy over one's well-being, the movement aims to foster a culture of healing and empowerment within communities that have long been marginalized and overworked.

<https://thenapministry.com/>

See coverage of the Nap Ministry Here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/13/well/live/nap-ministry-bishop-tricia-hersey.html> **and here:** <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/1127470930>

Call the Nap Ministry Hotline for a Recorded Rest Message: 1-833-588-6277

Tricia Hersey has also published a **“Rest Deck: 50 Practices to Resist Grind Culture”** which includes a deck of 50 powerful rest practices helps you embrace rest as a form of radical communal care and personal liberation. Available wherever books are sold!

Considering the unique demands of the theater industry, prioritizing adequate and quality sleep becomes vital for maintaining optimal performance, creativity, and overall well-being. A well-rested body and mind are essential for thriving in a field that often requires intense dedication and passion. Happy resting!

