# Why Can't I Relax?

If rest makes you more anxious instead of less, nothing is wrong with you. When you are used to staying alert, calm can feel unguarded. Knowing what your mind is protecting you from can help rest feel safe again.

## Signs you might be bracing

- ☐ You can't enjoy a good week because you're waiting for the other shoe to drop.
- ☐ The first days of vacation are the hardest, or you get sick as soon as you slow down.
- ☐ You check email on your day off "just so nothing surprises me Monday."
- ☐ You cut good news short: "Don't jinx it." "It's too early to celebrate."
- ☐ Breathing exercises make you feel worse, and you've decided you're just bad at relaxing.

## What makes calm feel risky?

Check any that fit. More than one often does.

### ☐ The fear of the drop

*"If I let my guard down, it will hit harder."*

Calm feels risky because a fall begins there.

### ☐ The worth story

*"Rest is lazy. If I'm not producing, I'm behind."*

Rest feels like a threat to who you are, not just to your schedule.

### ☐ Your mind or body speaks up

*"As soon as I stop, my mind starts racing."*

or *"Why is my heart doing that?"*

Stillness brings up what busyness was covering.

### ☐ Letting go of the wheel

*"I need to stay on top of things."*

Relaxing feels like losing your grip on things.

**If you let yourself fully relax for an afternoon, what are you afraid would happen?**

## Try this: rest as practice

1. Choose ten minutes of unstructured ease. No podcast, no to-do list, no phone.
2. Rate your anxiety from 0 to 10 before and after.
3. Expect it to rise at first. The goal is to *stay*, not to feel calm right away.
4. Afterward, ask: did the thing I feared actually happen?

| Day | Before | After | What I noticed |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Real rest means ***trusting*** that you can respond ***when*** something comes.