

BODY-LED LIVING

A gentle workbook for understanding why rest feels hard

by Vjera

Rest is not a reward for finishing everything. It is a human need.

Why Is Rest So Hard?

This workbook is not about forcing yourself to rest “better.” It is an invitation to notice the beliefs, habits, and definitions of health you may be carrying—and to make space for a fuller version of wellbeing.

A healthy body is not only a body that moves. It is also a body that can pause, recover, feel safe, receive care, and be still without guilt.

Move slowly. There are no right answers. Let your first, honest response be enough.

Part 1 — What Does Rest Mean to Me?

Instructions: Read each activity and notice the first thought, judgment, or meaning that arises. These are examples—not rules. Circle the ones that feel familiar, cross out those that do not, and add your own words where needed.

Activity	Thought or meaning I may attach to it
1. Taking a nap	“If I stop now, I will lose momentum and fall behind.”
2. Listening to music	“I should combine this with chores, work, or something useful.”
3. Scrolling on my phone	“This is easier than being still with myself.”
4. Going for a walk with no goal	“I need a destination, a step count, or a reason for it to matter.”
5. Booking a massage or haircut	“I can justify this because it is an appointment—not because I deserve care.”
6. Watching Netflix	“I can relax after I have finished enough.”
7. Reading for pleasure	“I should be learning something or catching up on something instead.”
8. Journaling freely	“I need to turn this into a lesson, plan, or breakthrough.”
9. Taking a long shower or bath	“A quick shower is enough; slowing down feels indulgent.”
10. Watching the sunset, clouds, or rain	“I do not have time to just sit and look.”
11. Cooking for myself	“It has to be efficient, impressive, or part of my routine to count.”
12. Drawing or colouring	“I am not creative enough for this to be worth doing.”
13. Putting body lotion on slowly as an act of care	“This is unnecessary—I should move on to the next thing.”

Which activities do I allow only when they give me a result—and which ones am I willing to receive simply because they feel caring, calming, or good?

Part 1 — Reflection

After reading the activities, pause and reflect. You do not need to solve anything here. You are simply becoming more aware of the story your mind tells about rest.

Which activity was hardest to call rest?

Which activity felt most uncomfortable, guilty, lazy, or “unproductive”?

Which activity only feels allowed when it has a result, purpose, or benefit?

What do you say to yourself when you are not achieving, improving, or completing something?

Whose voice does that sound like?

When did you first learn that slowing down was unsafe, lazy, selfish, or something you had to earn?

Part 2 — What Is Rest Opposite To?

Sometimes the difficulty with rest is not really about rest itself. It is about what we learned to value more than rest: being productive, working hard, achieving, creating, helping, improving, or succeeding.

When these qualities become linked to worth, stillness can start to feel like failure.

Read each belief, then pause with the reframe. What feels familiar? What would change if this were true?

Rest can feel opposite to...	The belief	Smashing the myth
Productivity	"If I am not getting something done, I am wasting time."	Productivity naturally has lower-output days. Rest supports a sustainable rhythm.
Hard work	"Rest means I am weak, lazy, or not trying hard enough."	Hard work needs rest days. Recovery helps you keep going without burning out.
Success	"If I slow down, I will fall behind."	Success has seasons. You can pause, recover, or change direction and still succeed.
Achievement	"My worth comes from what I accomplish."	You are worthy on the days you do not achieve anything visible.
Creation	"If I am not creating, I am falling behind."	Creativity needs space, boredom, quiet, and time to receive new ideas.
Discipline	"A disciplined person keeps going, even when tired."	Real discipline includes listening to your limits and keeping promises to your body.

Part 2 — Smashing the Myths

Rest does not take away from your ambition, success, discipline, or creativity. It makes each of them more sustainable.

Rest can feel opposite to...	The belief	Smashing the myth
Usefulness	"I am lovable when I am helping, giving, or needed."	You do not have to be useful to deserve care, love, or rest.
Control	"If I slow down, everything might fall apart."	Rest is not losing control. It helps you return to what matters and what is yours to hold.
Improvement	"Every moment should make me better, healthier, or more successful."	You do not need to improve every moment. Some moments are for simply being alive.
Being busy	"A full schedule proves I matter."	Being busy is not the same as being fulfilled, connected, or well.
Safety	"If I stop paying attention or preparing, something could go wrong."	You can be safe without being on high alert. Rest can teach your body the present is not an emergency.
Worthiness	"I have to earn my right to rest."	Rest is a human need—not a prize for doing enough.

Part 2 — Where Did I Learn This?

These beliefs can come from family, school, sport, work, social media, religion, financial pressure, cultural expectations, or simply watching the adults around us never pause. They are often passed down without anyone meaning to cause harm.

Circle the sentences that feel familiar. Add your own.

- ☐ “You can rest when everything is finished.”
- ☐ “There is always something that needs doing.”
- ☐ “Don’t be lazy.”
- ☐ “Work hard now, enjoy life later.”
- ☐ “You need to earn your break.”
- ☐ “You should be doing something useful.”
- ☐ “You have so much potential—don’t waste it.”
- ☐ “No pain, no gain.”
- ☐ “You cannot just sit around all day.”
- ☐ “Other people have it harder—be grateful and keep going.”
- ☐ “If you want to succeed, you have to work harder than everyone else.”
- ☐ “You should always be improving yourself.”
- ☐ “You need to be productive.”
- ☐ “We do not have time for that.”
- ☐ “Finish your work first.”
- ☐ “Being busy is a good thing.”
- ☐ “What did you achieve today?”
- ☐ “You are so good when you are helpful.”
- ☐ “You can relax after you have earned it.”
- ☐ “You are falling behind.”

Part 2 — Reflection

What did rest mean in my home growing up? Was it welcomed, criticised, rushed, earned, avoided, or only allowed when someone was sick?

Which qualities did my family or culture value most: productivity, achievement, helping, success, discipline, appearance, creation, or being busy?

What did I learn I had to do in order to feel worthy, safe, praised, or loved?

What might change if I believed that rest supports my life, rather than takes away from it?

Rest is not the absence of value. I remain worthy when I pause.

Part 3 — My Higher Self

The version of me I am creating

Imagine the version of you who feels grounded, rested, connected to herself, and no longer believes she has to earn rest.

She is not perfect. She still has goals, responsibilities, and full days—but she makes space for both movement and recovery.

Circle the practices you see her having in her daily or weekly life.

- ☐ Gym / strength training
- ☐ Pilates
- ☐ Running
- ☐ Cycling
- ☐ Swimming
- ☐ Yoga
- ☐ Stretching
- ☐ Slow walks
- ☐ Naps
- ☐ Sleep routine
- ☐ Listening to music
- ☐ Reading for pleasure
- ☐ Watching something comforting
- ☐ Long showers or baths
- ☐ Body lotion / body care
- ☐ Journaling
- ☐ Drawing or colouring
- ☐ Watching the sunset
- ☐ Time in nature
- ☐ Cooking for herself
- ☐ Massage or haircut
- ☐ Meditation
- ☐ Breathwork
- ☐ Time with safe people
- ☐ Saying no
- ☐ Doing nothing

Part 3 — Reflection

Which practices did you circle?

Which practices feel easiest to bring into your life now?

Which practices feel hardest to allow yourself—and why?

Choose one practice to bring into your week. What is one small way you can begin?

My higher self makes space for movement, stillness, joy, and recovery.

Part 4 — Creating a Routine for My Higher Self

Imagine a new rhythm for the version of you you are creating: a life with movement, care, pleasure, quiet, and recovery—not just tasks and productivity.

Write each habit or routine you want her to have in the column where it belongs. You can use the practices you circled in Part 3, or add your own.

Movement and energy	Stillness and recovery	Care, joy, and connection

Reflection

What do you notice about the routine you created?

Which column was easiest to fill?

Which column needs more space in your real life?

What is one small way you can begin living this routine this week?

My higher-self routine includes effort, rest, care, joy, and connection.

Part 5 — Highest Self and Current Habits

Imagine the version of you who feels grounded, well, connected, and emotionally resourced. Not perfect—just supported.

My highest-self values:

She values:

She protects time for:

She believes rest means:

She knows her body needs:

She allows herself to:

My current habits

Look at your real week with honesty and compassion.

What I say I value	What I actually practise most often

Part 6 — A New Definition of Rest

Complete the sentences below in a way that feels honest and believable—not forced.

Rest is not ...

Rest can be ...

I do not need to earn rest by ...

This week, one small form of rest I will practise is ...

I will let it be enough, even if it does not make me more productive.

Closing reminder

Rest is not the opposite of discipline. Rest is part of a healthy, sustainable life.