

STALL STREET JOURNAL

HOW TO RELAX WHEN YOUR BRAIN DOESN'T WANT TO

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As someone with ADHD, I have spent my time at Bowdoin on a quest trying to figure out how to relax when my brain never shuts off its constant influx of thoughts. Relaxation is a large part of self care, and it's difficult to practice forms of self care when you can't focus on the moment. Here are my tips on how to relax when your brain doesn't want to:

1. Recognize that relaxation looks different for everyone. For some people, going on a ten mile run is a form of relaxation. I personally am not one of those people. There's no right or wrong way to relax. Figuring out what makes you feel at ease will likely require some trial and error which leads into my next tip...

2. Try new things! I know it's cheesy, but Bowdoin makes it easy. Scroll through Campus Groups and you'll probably find a bunch of weekly wellness events that you didn't even know existed on campus (reiki, acupuncture, radical self care, etc.). Despite thinking I wouldn't be capable of sitting still for 20 minutes straight, I attended one of the reiki clinics this semester. Not only was I able to sit still the entire time, but I left feeling the calmest I have in two years.

3. Relax in short spurts. My favorite relaxation technique is to spread out relaxing activities throughout my day during my free time. If you're like me and the thought of spending a long time doing one thing stresses you out no matter how calming that thing is, this technique might work for you. For example, I'll spend 10 minutes listening to a podcast when I wake up or 30 minutes doing yoga during the gap between my classes.

I hope these tips help and that you are able to make feeling calm and relaxed a priority for yourself.

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IMPORTANT IDEAS FOR SAFEGUARDING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AND PHYSICAL WELLBEING AT BOWDOIN

Ryan Supple '23 & Zack Goorno '23

- **Set aside time to exercise:** While it may feel like you don't have time, 30 minutes of exercise a day can have positive physical and mental health benefits (plus it can make you more productive when you need to get work done)!
- **Eat three meals a day:** Don't skip breakfast! Or any other meals for that matter... This routine gives you enough time to digest your previous meal completely while fully utilizing all your required nutrients. Skipping meals can increase stress levels and fatigue too.
- **Prioritize sleep:** While the semester endures, it is very easy to discount your sleep. Do NOT do it! Believe it or not, we are still young and developing, so sleep is as important now as ever! That 10 page paper can wait until tomorrow... Plus, you will be much more efficient with your work if you are well rested.
- **Try to expose your body to natural light:** With colder weather inbound and the sun setting earlier due to daylight savings, it is more important than ever to get outside and expose yourself to natural sunlight. Sunlight helps improve sleep, strengthens the immune system, and helps ward off depression. You can also consider taking Vitamin D pills this winter to make up for the lack of sunlight.
- **Talk to somebody:** Whether a friend, a proctor, a professor, or a counselor, don't feel like you need to bottle up your emotions and keep them inside. Simply talking to someone can take off a tremendous emotional load. There are tons of good listeners out there who are willing to help.
- **Go to Peer Counseling:** If you are not sure who to talk to, this is a great place to start. Peer Counseling meets Wednesdays from 8:00-9:00pm in the Shannon Room at Hubbard Hall. It's a great way to lighten the mental load through the empathy of peers!
- **Download a meditation app and start practicing:** Headspace, Calm, or 10% Happier are all great, and free, options. Getting in the habit of meditating, even just a few minutes per week, can have tremendous benefits. It can also help keep your mind in the present moment instead of dwelling on the past or feeling anxious about the future.
- **Don't compare yourself to others:** It is very easy to look around at Bowdoin and feel overwhelmed. While many people put on a smile and seem to be enjoying themselves, loads of students are struggling and fighting internal battles beneath the surface. Don't feel alone in your experience. You are here for being you, and that is enough!
- **Do the things you want to do:** To be completely frank, there are a lot of things we do on a daily basis simply because we have to. Whether it be classes, homework, meetings, or networking, it can be mentally exhausting. Make time to watch that movie, do that puzzle, or play that game of Spikeball on the quad! It will improve your quality of life tremendously!
- **Do the best you can:** While everything listed above is important, it is impossible to tackle them all at once. Start simple and build from there, slowly cementing these healthy habits over time. You are a Bowdoin student and you are doing great!

DON'T FORGET TO GET YOUR FLU SHOT!