

Your psyche

I, Me, Myself

Don't remember the last time you took a break? Then, do yourself a favour and take a breather...

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'Me' time - what's that?

"Because women are encouraged to fill up their lives—and are naturally good at doing many things at once—they may not realise when they're near the breaking point. The problem is that it's easy to forget to take any time to stop and recharge, which is absolutely necessary to rejuvenate your body and soul," says Laura Berman Fortgang, author of 'Living Your Best life'. But it's one thing to know that you need to take a break to rest and do nothing; it's quite another to put it into practice. As Sanghamitra S, media person, explains, "The toughest challenge has been balancing time for friends and family, and time for myself. But I am learning to be constructively selfish. I make time for myself if I need to, irrespective of how pressing the other issues are."

Do I really need it?

Like common sense indicates (which we often choose to ignore), everyone needs some down time. How you choose to 'invest' time in yourself is a personal decision but a break is absolutely mandatory. As Dr. Shamsah Sonawalla, consultant psychiatrist, Jaslok Hospital, explains, "To take time off is important to be able to recharge and refresh oneself. It is a necessity. A woman who is continuously on the go can begin to feel burnt-out, with her health and functioning being affected. Many illnesses such as depression, heart disease and even cancer, can be triggered by uncontrolled stress."

The advantages...

If you thought the whole concept of making some 'me' time is highly overrated, one look at the benefits will make you rethink your stand. For starters, Dr. Sonawalla points out, time-off can facilitate the relaxation response, which has been shown to lower heart rate, blood pressure and elicit feelings of peace and tranquillity. Added to these there, are anti-aging effects and better health, besides having a sense of being calm. And if you thought you were being selfish by taking this self-imposed break, then think again. Dr. Sonawalla adds that quality 'me' time can improve interpersonal relationships, and give a better quality of life for families and children. After all, if you look after yourself better, with the right balance, your family is likely to be happier too.

THE ROUTE...

Start with basics - adequate sleep, good nutrition and exercise.

Create some 'space' for yourself daily, ideally both in the morning and in the evening, even if it is just 10-15 minutes – transition time. It could include reading the newspaper, having a cup of tea, listening to music, meditating or just sitting quietly.

Take several 'mental rests' during the day.

Learn to let go. Learn to live with some imperfection, do not always try to be perfect. Try focussing intently on an everyday activity like shower, cleaning the closet or washing dishes- even these can be refreshing instead of being just a chore.

Learn to say 'no' – don't over-commit.

Develop a hobby – and devote some time to it on a regular basis.

