

# Reducing Over-Stimulation to Focus On Yourself

## **Objective**

To learn how to relax your mind and body by identifying and limiting the activities in your life that cause stress and keep your mind on “alert.”

## **You Should Know**

Most of us live in a world full of stimulation—TV, radio, music, smartphones, computers, video games, traffic, road construction, and other environmental noises. Sometimes it’s out of our control—for instance, if you’re a parent, kids can be on full tilt full time. Sometimes, we seek out the stimulation, perhaps to avoid feelings, perhaps because silence feels weird or uncomfortable.

Studies show that constant stimulation and mental activity can lead to depression, anxiety, attention and memory problems, and difficulty concentrating or focusing, all of which can be challenging and stress-inducing.

Give your brain a break. That doesn’t mean you need to go off to a Zen retreat and take a vow of silence. You can experiment with simple ways to take breaks from all the noise and stimulation. Start by noticing that there is a quiet place deep inside all of us—if only we take a moment to listen.

## **What to Do**

Here is a list of things that might be keeping you from relaxing your mind. For the next week or few weeks, select several items from this list and try to change your habits or revise your schedule, if possible. Ask for help, if needed. See if you notice any change in your feelings or your general mood.

- Checking email
- Checking Instagram
- Childcare responsibilities
- Driving with the radio on
- Going from meeting to meeting
- Going out to clubs
- Going to loud outdoor concerts
- Going to parties
- Job demands
- Listening to music with earbuds
- Posting or reading posts on Facebook
- Spending time on other social media
- Talking on the phone
- Texting
- Visiting friends and family
- Watching TV news
- Watching TV sport

What else would you add to this list?

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What are the top three items that are getting in the way of relaxing your mind?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

On a scale of 1 to 10, how willing are you to experiment with cutting back on or eliminating your top three activities for the next week or so? \_\_\_\_\_  
(1 = very unwilling, 5 = somewhat willing, 10 = very willing)

If you want to cut back, when and how much will you allow yourself to do this activity (for example, check Facebook only three times a day for no more than five minutes; turn off the TV after 9:00 p.m.)? Be very specific. Tell someone you trust about your choice and ask for accountability. Better yet, find an “unplugging” buddy!

Name of person/buddy: \_\_\_\_\_

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How do you feel about cutting back on or eliminating the activities that interfere with relaxing your mind?

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## Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? \_\_\_\_\_

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned from this exercise?

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