



# Need a Break?

We were recently asked to research the benefits of taking breaks while at work. Meg Selig offers the following in a recent *Psychology Today* article.

## Why Take Breaks?

Here is a summary of recent research and thinking on the value of taking breaks:

- “Movement breaks” are essential for your physical and emotional health.
- Breaks can prevent “decision fatigue.”
- Breaks restore motivation, especially for long-term goals.
- Breaks increase productivity and creativity.
- “Waking rest” helps consolidate memories and improve learning.

Scientists have known for some time that one purpose of sleep is to consolidate memories. However, there is also evidence that resting while awake likewise improves memory formation. During a rest period it appears that the brain reviews and ingrains what it previously learned.

## Good Breaks:

The activities below have a special power to refresh and recharge your mind and body because they use brain regions other than the prefrontal cortex:

1. Walk or exercise.
2. Connect with nature...or a streetscape.
3. Change your environment.
4. Have lunch or a healthy snack.
5. Take a “power nap”—if it won’t get you fired.
6. Take a few deep breaths.
7. Meditate. Mindfulness meditation offers a temporary respite from goal achievement.
8. Daydream. Daydreaming gives the prefrontal cortex a break, taking you on a brief journey to your unconscious mind where chaos and creativity reign.
9. Get creative! If your work requires you to use your logical, linguistic left-brain, deliberately choose a break activity that will activate your creative and visual right-brain—like drawing or even doodling.
10. Drink coffee (or tea). Every day there’s a new piece of research touting the health benefits of coffee-drinking in moderation. Sipping coffee can be a mindful pleasure in itself. (Just don’t drink too much. As with any drug, the effects become less potent when you develop tolerance.)

**Struggling with a workplace issue? Maybe EAP can help. Call us for a free consultation at 800-236-3231.**