



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
*Mental health for all*

# ~~The Work Book~~ THE REST BOOK

**Strong Enough to Rest**  
A guide to the 7 types of rest



# WELCOME

## This tool is an invitation – not an assignment.

Rest is often framed as something we earn after pushing ourselves to the edge. For many women, rest feels conditional, indulgent, or out of reach altogether.

At the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), we see something different.

Many women carry invisible labour every day – emotional, mental, relational, and caregiving work that often goes unnoticed and unsupported. At the same time, the systems around us – work, childcare, eldercare, and other responsibilities – make it difficult to take rest when we need it most. Over time, that constant pressure adds up, shaping our mental health in ways that are rarely acknowledged.

This tool reframes rest as strength, not weakness. As a mental health need, not a personal failure. As something women deserve – not something they must justify.

It's also important to note that rest isn't equally available to everyone, and that finding time often depends on having the support, resources and flexibility to do so.

Use this tool at your own pace. Take what's helpful for your life and situation, and leave the rest. Nothing here is meant to create more pressure or more work.



# THE SEVEN TYPES OF REST, EXPLAINED

Rest is not one thing. Mental health depends on many forms of restoration — some of which are often missing, even when we're sleeping.

Below are the seven types of rest. As you read, notice what resonates. There's no need to fix anything yet. Awareness is enough.

## 1. PHYSICAL REST

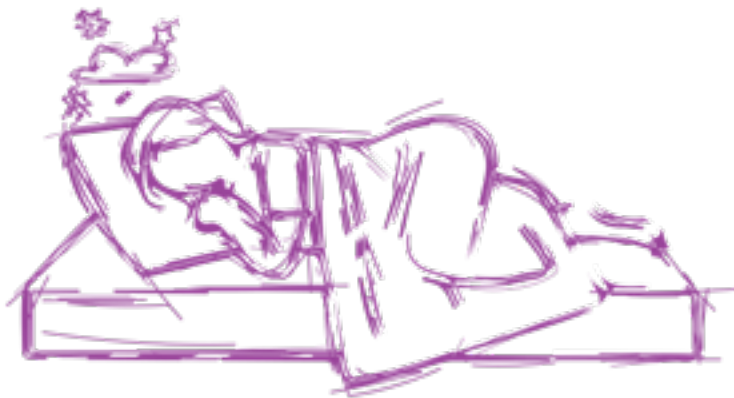
### Letting the body recover

Physical rest includes sleep, but it also includes slowing down, releasing tension, and allowing the body to recover from effort and stress.

Physical rest can look like:

- Going to bed earlier without “catching up” on everything first
- Sitting down when you're tired, instead of pushing through
- Gentle stretching, breathing, or movement
- Letting yourself rest when your body asks for it

Physical rest supports energy, mood, and resilience.



## 2. MENTAL REST

### Giving your mind a break

Mental rest is relief from constant thinking, planning, and problem-solving.

Mental rest can look like:

- Writing things down so you don't have to hold them in your head
- Taking a short break from decision-making
- Allowing unfinished tasks to wait
- Creating small pockets of quiet or simplicity

Mental rest helps reduce overwhelm and cognitive fatigue.



### 3. EMOTIONAL REST

#### Space to be honest

Emotional rest comes from spaces where you don't have to explain, perform, or protect others from your feelings.

Emotional rest can look like:

- Saying how you're really doing — without minimizing
- Letting yourself feel tired, frustrated, or unsure
- Being supported without having to be "the strong one"
- Setting limits on emotional labour

Emotional rest supports clarity, connection, and self-trust.



### 4. SOCIAL REST

#### Relationships that don't drain you

Social rest doesn't mean being alone. It means spending time with people who feel safe, familiar, and easy to be around.

Social rest can look like:

- Spending time with people who don't expect anything from you
- Choosing fewer, more supportive connections
- Letting go of social obligations that feel draining
- Being quiet together without pressure

Social rest helps restore energy and a sense of belonging.



## 5. SENSORY REST

### Relief from stimulation

Sensory rest gives your nervous system a break from constant noise, screens, and stimulation.

Sensory rest can look like:

- Turning off notifications for a while
- Spending time in quiet or low-stimulus spaces
- Stepping outside or noticing nature
- Soft lighting, fewer screens, or intentional pauses

Sensory rest supports calm, focus, and nervous system regulation.



## 6. CREATIVE REST

### Reconnecting with curiosity and joy

Creative rest isn't about producing or achieving. It's about experiencing beauty, inspiration, or meaning without pressure.

Creative rest can look like:

- Reading, listening to music, or noticing beauty
- Doing something just because it feels good
- Letting yourself play, imagine, or explore
- Enjoying creativity without an outcome

Creative rest helps renew perspective and emotional vitality.



## 7. SPIRITUAL REST

### A sense of grounding or belonging

Spiritual rest comes from feeling connected to something larger than yourself — your values, nature, faith, or community.

Spiritual rest can look like:

- Spending time in nature
- Reflecting on what matters most to you
- Practicing gratitude, prayer, or mindfulness
- Feeling part of something beyond daily demands

Spiritual rest supports meaning, grounding, and hope.



# REST SELF-ASSESSMENT

Take a moment to check in – gently.

## PHYSICAL REST

**You may need more physical rest if you notice:**

- You feel tired even after sleeping
- Your body feels tense, heavy, or sore
- You push through fatigue because you feel you have to
- You rarely feel physically restored

## EMOTIONAL REST

**You may need more emotional rest if:**

- You are often the one others rely on
- You hold back how you're really feeling
- You manage other people's emotions alongside your own
- You feel emotionally drained or brittle

## MENTAL REST

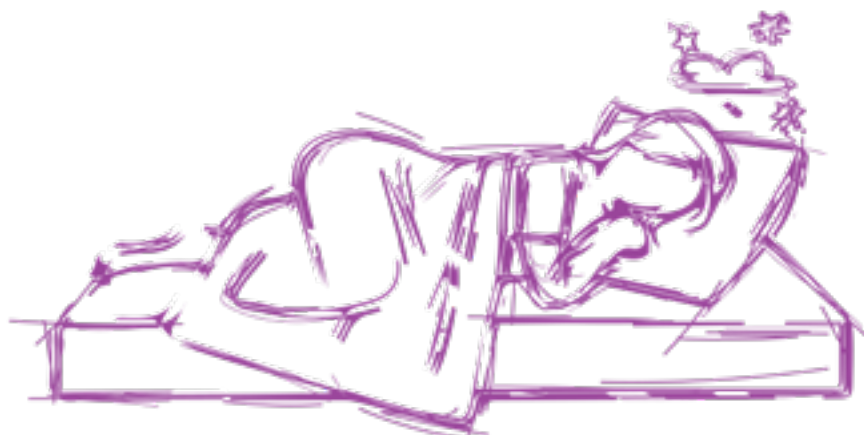
**You may need more mental rest if:**

- Your thoughts rarely slow down
- You are constantly planning, remembering, or anticipating
- You struggle to concentrate or feel mentally scattered
- Your mind feels "on" all the time

## SOCIAL REST

**You may need more social rest if:**

- Social interactions feel exhausting
- You feel pressure to perform or be "on" around others
- You rarely feel fully yourself with people
- You leave conversations feeling depleted rather than restored



## SENSORY REST

**You may need more sensory rest if:**

- You feel overstimulated or easily overwhelmed
- Silence or stillness feels rare
- You are constantly connected to screens or notifications
- Noise, light, or clutter feels draining

## CREATIVE REST

**You may need more creative rest if:**

- Life feels heavy, repetitive, or overly practical
- You feel disconnected from curiosity or joy
- Everything feels like responsibility or obligation
- You rarely feel inspired or moved

## SPIRITUAL REST

**You may need more spiritual rest if:**

- You feel disconnected or ungrounded
- You question your purpose or direction
- You feel alone in carrying what you carry
- You long for a sense of meaning or belonging

## PAUSE AND NOTICE

Take a moment and reflect:

**Which sections stood out most?**

**Where did you check the most boxes?**

**Which type of rest feels most urgent right now?**

There is no right answer.

This is information, not a diagnosis.



# REST REFLECTION JOURNAL

This section is meant to be used lightly.

You don't need to answer every question or write very much. Begin by reading through the prompts and notice which ones feel supportive right now. Start there.

There's no right way to move through this. You can pause, skip around, or return later. If anything feels heavy, it's okay to stop.

This is about noticing what brings ease and care — not fixing anything.

## 1. WHAT'S SUPPORTING ME RIGHT NOW?

Before naming what's missing, take a moment to notice what's already helping.

You might reflect on:

- People who support you
- Moments that feel calm or steady
- Habits or routines that bring ease
- Places where you feel safe or grounded

*Reflection: What, even in small ways, is helping me feel okay right now?*

## 2. WHERE DO I FEEL MOST AT EASE?

Rest often shows up quietly — in familiar places, simple routines, or moments of connection.

*Reflection: When do I feel most like myself? Where does my body soften or my mind quiet?*

## 3. WHAT WOULD FEEL SUPPORTIVE - NOT PERFECT?

Instead of focusing on what you "should" need, notice what gently draws you in.

*Reflection: If rest were an invitation, what kind would I want to accept right now? Physical, mental, emotional, social, sensory, creative, or spiritual?*

#### 4. WHAT WOULD FEEL SUPPORTIVE - NOT PERFECT?

Rest doesn't have to be ideal to be meaningful.

*Reflection: What is one small thing that would make today feel a little lighter? What would support me, without asking too much?*

#### 5. WHAT AM I READY TO RELEASE, EVEN BRIEFLY?

Letting go — even temporarily — can be a form of rest.

*Reflection: Is there a responsibility, expectation, or thought I could loosen my grip on today? What would it be like to carry it less tightly?*

#### 6. WHERE COULD I OFFER MYSELF A LITTLE MORE KINDNESS?

Rest often begins with how we speak to ourselves.

*Reflection: What would it sound like to meet myself with understanding right now? What would I say to someone I care about, if they felt this way?*

#### 7. WHAT DOES MY NERVOUS SYSTEM NEED?

This isn't about logic — it's about sensation.

*Reflection: What helps me feel calmer or more settled? Quiet, movement, warmth, fresh air, connection, stillness?*

# REST ACTION PLAN

Seems like an oxymoron, no? But we know from research and from lived experience that if we don't make time for rest, it will always get pushed to the bottom of the priority list.

You don't need to do everything here. You don't need to finish these pages.

These activities are meant to be picked up and put down, returned to, or skipped entirely. Choose what feels useful today. And come back to this whenever you're feeling stretched too thin and need something restorative.

## 1. MY REST RIGHT NOW

A quick check-in

**Right now, the kind of rest I need most is:**  
(check one or more)

- Physical
- Mental
- Emotional
- Social
- Sensory
- Creative
- Spiritual

### What tells me this?

(You can jot a word, a sentence, or nothing at all.)

**If I could describe how I'm feeling in a few words, it would be:**

## 2. PICK YOUR REST

Small, supportive options

Choose one or two ideas below — or add your own. You don't need to do them perfectly.

### Physical Rest

- Go to bed earlier than usual
- Sit or lie down when I feel tired
- Stretch, breathe, or move gently

### Mental Rest

- Write things down instead of holding them in my head
- Let one thing wait
- Take a short break from decisions

## Emotional Rest

Say how I'm really doing (to myself or someone else)

Allow myself not to be "the strong one"

Set a limit on emotional labour

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## Social Rest

Spend time with someone who feels easy

Decline a social obligation

Be quiet together

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## Sensory Rest

Turn off notifications for a while

Spend time in quiet or nature

Reduce screens or stimulation

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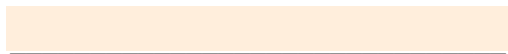
## Creative Rest

Listen to music or read for pleasure

Notice something beautiful

Do something just because it feels good

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## Spiritual Rest

Spend time in nature or stillness

Reflect on what matters to me

Connect with faith, values, or community

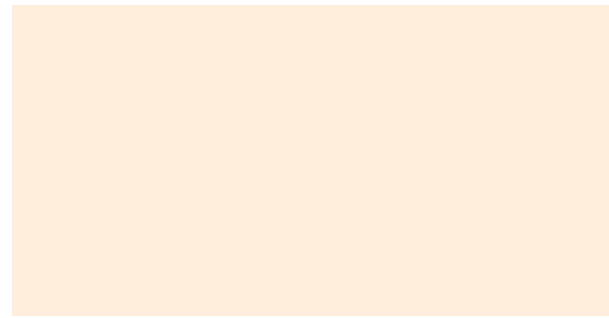
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## 3. MAKE IT REAL

A gentle plan (optional)

**One thing I'd like to try this week:**  
(Just one. Smaller is better.)



**When might it fit naturally into my day or week?**

Morning

Afternoon

Evening

Weekend

No set time — when it feels right

## MY REST WINDOW

You can:

- Put a checkmark when you rest.
- Write one word (quiet, fresh air, connection).
- Leave it blank.

This is not about consistency. It's about noticing.

	Week 1	Week 2
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

## 4. WHAT I NOTICED

Reflection without judgment.

After trying one or two things, take a moment to reflect — or don't.

### What felt supportive?

### What felt harder than expected?

### What surprised me?

## 5. PERMISSION

Check any that feel true — or add your own.

I'm allowed to rest without earning it

I don't have to carry everything alone

Rest doesn't need to look impressive

Small moments of rest matter

My mental health deserves care

One reminder I want to carry with me:

Asking for Support (If this feels safe)

Sometimes rest requires support from others.

You might find it helpful to try language like:

"I'M FEELING DEPLETED AND COULD USE SOME HELP RIGHT NOW."

"I NEED TO SLOW DOWN - CAN WE ADJUST THIS?"

"I CAN'T CARRY THIS ALONE ANYMORE."

Asking for support is not failure. It's a form of strength.

# COMMUNITY AFFIRMATIONS

Read these slowly. Write them on a post-it or your mirror. Or skip them. Or return later.

We know that there are things outside our control that make it harder to rest – the demands on women, the state of the world, the unrelenting unprecedentedness of the times we’re living through – but a sense of unworthiness or undeservingness should never be one of them. These affirmations are here to remind us that rest is our birthright.

You deserve rest.

You are allowed to slow down.

You are strong enough to care for yourself.

You are not meant to carry everything alone.

**What affirmations resonate with you, personally? What feels specific to your life?** Write your own:



# CLOSING

Rest is not about doing less because you can't handle more.

It's about recognizing that mental health depends on care, support, and recovery — not endless endurance.

At CMHA, we work to strengthen the community supports and systems that make rest possible, especially for women facing greater barriers.

We also work to challenge the systems that prevent us from getting the rest we need to be well.

Because when women are supported to rest, recover, and reconnect — everyone benefits.

YOU ARE STRONG ENOUGH TO REST.



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[www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)

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