Rest without the guilt

A free one-page guide to the video "Rest Isn't Lazy. That Guilt Is Lying to You."

A lot of the guilt that shows up when you rest comes from a belief: that rest is wasted time. Here is what the studies behind the video found, four ways to rest that count, and a tracker for your next four weeks of evenings.

What the research found

> The belief drains the fun. In four studies with more than 1,300 people, those who saw leisure as a waste of time enjoyed it less. In one, they also reported more stress, anxiety and depression.
>
> Tonietto, Malkoc, Reczek & Norton (2021), JESP

> "Rest is productive" didn't help. People told that leisure is productive enjoyed a funny video no more than a control group did. Being told it's wasteful made them enjoy it less.
>
> Tonietto, Malkoc, Reczek & Norton (2021), JESP

> Recovery comes in four kinds: switching off from work, relaxing, learning something, and choosing how you spend the time.
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> Sonnentag & Fritz (2007), Journal of Occupational Health Psychology

> Loose beats exact. Scheduling leisure at a set time made it feel more like work. Saving the time without exact start and end times erased that.
>
> Tonietto & Malkoc (2016), Journal of Marketing Research

Try it: the four steps from the video

1. **Name the belief.** When the guilt shows up, catch the sentence underneath it, like "this is a waste of time." It's an idea you picked up, not a fact about you.
2. **Give rest a reason that matters to you.** Not "rest is productive." Something real: I rest so I'm not short with my kids.
3. **Pick your kind of recovery.** Work follows you home? Detach first: phone in another room. Drained? Relax. Restless? Learn something. Day run by other people? Choose something yourself.
4. **Keep it small, regular and loose.** An evening, not an appointment. Most nights, not one week a year.

Did I rest tonight?

	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
Week 1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Week 2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Week 3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Week 4	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Your plan

The sentence my guilt uses _____

What my rest is for _____

My kind of recovery this week _____

My loose rest window _____

Keep in mind

These studies measured how much people enjoyed leisure and how they felt, not guilt itself, and some of the links are correlations. Vacations help, but the effect fades soon after you're back at work, so small and regular beats rare and big. The guilt will still show up some nights. Let it, and rest anyway.