

“Help! I just can't relax!”

It's Sunday afternoon, and you want to unwind, but your mind keeps whirring with worries. Here, experts share easy ways to quiet the din so you can enjoy the downtime you deserve

Find your calm

Picture happy

Because we live in a go-go-go culture, the hyped-up feeling spurred by a steady flow of adrenaline can become our new “normal,” reveals psychiatrist Ludmila De Faria, M.D. A simple trick to outsmart “adrenaline tolerance” is to call to mind positive memories. “Pulling out this mental photo album causes your brain to release joy-boosting serotonin and dopamine,” she says. “Replacing the undertow of adrenaline with soothing hormones makes it easier for you to unwind.”

Let it RAIN

To get to the root of an anxiety spiral, try out RAIN: *recognize, allow, investigate, nurture*, advises mindfulness expert Tara Brach, Ph.D. By first *recognizing* that you're anxious, and *allowing* for it, you give yourself the power to change, she encourages. Then

investigate by asking yourself why you're stressed. Your answer will give you clarity so you can either resolve it or let it go for now. Finally, put your hand on your heart and send a *nurturing* message: *Thank you, anxiety, for trying to protect me, but I'm good now.* Says Brach, “This combination of mindfulness and self-compassion eases the emotions preventing us from relaxing.”

Melt weekly worries

With Monday looming, it's easy to become consumed by worries about the week ahead, says psychologist Seth J. Gillihan, Ph.D. Make a list of everything on your mind, he urges. It's especially helpful to assign a day to each task: Email my sister about my daughter's birthday (Monday); make doctor's appointment (Tuesday). This puts to rest the persistent question, *When will I find time to do this?*, allowing your mind to finally relax on your Sunday.



Lift your spirits

Breathe in joy

One of the best ways to invite joy is simply to breathe. “The art of pausing is a sacred act,” says Brach. Stopping to focus on our breath brings us into presence with our spirit. Simply close your eyes and feel your inhale coming into your chest and belly, then exhale slowly, intentionally letting go. “You may feel anxious at first, but stay with it. Over time, your breath will connect to your innate presence, helping you discover a greater capacity to feel wonder.”

Savor the moment

When we're fully in the “now,” worries about the past and future disappear, explains Gillihan. To bring yourself

into the present, just take in your surroundings. Note the couch, the clock, the tree outside. Listen to the wind chimes on your porch. Feel your body sink into your chair. “When we invite our mind to be as present as our body,” Gillihan says, “we have a sense of coming home to a place of joy that lets us relax.”

Get creative

Every form of creative expression, from drawing to photography, boosts our mood. Brach describes this experience as a *remembering*. “Remembering our spirit gives us a refuge of peace and well-being, allowing us to step out of worry, and into a larger sense of awareness, beauty and peace.”



Our expert panel



Ludmila De Faria, M.D., an associate professor at the University of Florida, chairs the American Psychiatric Association's Committee on Women's Mental Health.



Tara Brach, Ph.D., author of *Radical Compassion*, is a world-renowned mindfulness and meditation teacher. Learn more at TaraBrach.com.



Seth J. Gillihan, Ph.D., author of *The CBT Deck for Anxiety, Rumination, & Worry*, is the host of the *Think Act Be* podcast. More at SethGillihan.com.