

# Ep #275: How to Actually Rest

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With Your Host

**Simone Grace Seol**

## Ep #275: How to Actually Rest

Hey, I'm Simone Seol, *I Am Your Korean Mom* you never knew you needed. Guess what? People need your services. It's not all lost, and they're looking for you right now. Let's help them find you. Let's do this.

Hey, everyone, let's talk about rest. I have been talking about rest a lot over the years, different forms of it, and one of the things that I've discovered is that for many people, rest seems inaccessible.

Rest seems inaccessible, because I think we as a culture are kind of bad at knowing what it looks like, what it feels like. We're not really sure where the entry points are. And for sure, many of us justifiably feel like we don't have that many options to rest.

I think rest is when we think about it, right? It conjures in our minds, images of going away on vacation, going to places that are a tropical beach, or whatever your flavor of that kind of escape or getaway is. For a lot of us, we're like, "I don't have the time, the money, the logistical ability to work that out anytime soon. And certainly, don't have enough time to take that kind of rest," as much as we need to.

I became really curious about deconstructing the idea of rest that's actually accessible. One book that has really become an anchor for me, and has been an education for me, and a prayer for me, one book that I cannot recommend enough, is Tricia Hersey's book *Rest Is Resistance*. You might have heard of Tricia Hersey as the founder of The Nap Ministries. That name was certainly familiar to me before I had read her book.

She really has championed the cause of naps, and the cause of rest as a form of resistance. One of her quotes, that I have really taken to heart, is that your body is a site of liberation. And rest is where you can begin to liberate yourself. It's where you're resistant against this go, go, exhausting capitalist world that is basically extracting endless labor for you, in order to keep systems in place that aren't really serving you, that aren't really serving us.

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She talks about how rest is political. In the book, she talks a lot about her history, and her politics and theology as a black woman. Thinking about black history, where not only in the United States but huge parts of the world was built on stolen black labor. The modern world that we inhabit, in humongous parts, built on the extracted, stolen labor of black people.

That's something that I have come to learn about through her work. And something that really reinforced the idea for me that, yeah, labor is not politically neutral, and rest is not politically neutral. Even though I am not a black woman, I am Korean, I really got a lot out of reading her ideas on rest.

So, I want to start by really strongly recommending her book. It's been a real awakening for me, and a real anchor for me in recent days. The rest of this episode is really me exploring how to apply that to my own life. And I want to say I'm not talking about rest from a place of 'I've got this all figured out. Now I'm an expert,' at all. I'm very much learning how to rest.

My journey doesn't look like everybody else's. It's not going to be cookie cutter. Another one of the things that Tricia Hersey talks about a lot, too, is that your journey towards rest and healing is not going to be cookie-cutter either.

Wherever you are in the journey of getting more rest, having more downtime, healing time, restoration time for yourself, your journey also gets to be its own. It doesn't have to look like anybody else's. There is no cookie-cutter journey.

So, along those lines, let me share with you some ideas about what it actually means to rest. I cannot tell you how many conversations I've had with my own clients and people on social media, with them telling me, "I wish I could afford to rest, but I can't. I wish I could, but I don't have time," energy, etc.

I didn't really begin to take the baby steps towards real, intentional rest until I expanded the idea, and I deepened the idea of rest for myself. What else

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it could mean, if it doesn't look like something that is really hard to reach for many of us?

So, here's an idea that I want to pose to you. What if rest wasn't necessarily about not doing, as much as it is about doing more of what you really want? And being more of who you really are? What if rest was less about not doing anything, than it was about restoration, restoring, and revealing parts of you that maybe have been abandoned or neglected, parts of you that could maybe use a little bit more nourishment?

I'm hoping that you could take away at least a few ideas for being able to access more rest now, in the near future, when most of us don't necessarily have all the resources in the world to be able to rest in the exact way that we'd like, or the exact way that we've been taught about what rest looks like. So, these are my field notes; I want to think about it like that. Field notes from exploring how to rest more and how to rest better.

The first idea about rest, is that rest could be doing things that slow down time. Something that makes time kind of fly by without my awareness, and not in a good way. Not like, "Ooh, this was so fun, time flew." But things that kind of make time pass in a mindless way. For me at least, it's scrolling. Right?

Scrolling unconsciously about random things. And before you know it, hours have passed and you don't necessarily feel more nourished. You don't necessarily feel restored. Time has just gone by. So, if those are things that quicken time, what are some things that slow down time for you?

For me, I'm just going to talk about mundane examples, because that's what I know. Maybe you have better ideas for yourself. When I intentionally take the time to, let's say, really play with my kid. One of the reasons I resist playing with my kid is exactly because it slows down time, right? I have to be really present. I have to do things at my kid's timing.

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Let's say we're playing with blocks, and he doesn't necessarily have goals in the ways that adults might, he's just kind of going with the flow. Really paying attention to him, being with him, and moving at the pace of a toddler. It slows down time for me, and that feels restive.

I'm not saying that it always feels restive to play with my kid, at all, sometimes it doesn't. But there are times when that way of being, that way of paying attention, has this act of slowing time down.

Another thing that I found that slows down time is just making stuff, making art. Making art sounds very loaded and serious. But even if it's just doodling, or even if it's just messing around on one of the instruments I play. Making the time to tidy up the corner of my room in a way that feels better. I think what all of these have in common, is that they require me to get out of my head and pay attention to my physical surroundings. Do something physically that has the effect of slowing down time.

Again, my examples are mundane. What are things that come up for you when I ask you: What are things that you do that slow down time?

Oh, I forgot to mention the biggest example that I keep turning to, it slows down time for me to cook from scratch, or partially from scratch, and to bake when I have time or energy to do that. Just chopping vegetables, mixing ingredients, stuff like that. Sometimes I don't think I have enough time to do that, and I'm wrong. When I do them, time moves a little bit differently.

Of course, these count because I actually like cooking and baking. You might hate it. For you, it might be something else. So, you ask yourself: What's something that I can do that can slow down time? I think capitalism runs on us all being in such a hurry. What's something that you do, that when you do it feels like time is slower?

That ties into my next suggestion about what rest could be if it's not just laying down and taking a nap and doing nothing, even though that is a perfectly incredible way to rest. What about playmaking? That's something

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that I said, when I just make art, when I just make music. Making art and making music, again, sounds very serious. But what if instead of that I said, playmaking? You can play-make music. You can play-make arts and crafts.

You can play-make just things, where you're not making something in order for it to be an amazing masterpiece. You're not doing something to improve your skills, necessarily. You're not doing something because it's going to get praise from others. You're making things because it's in our nature to play. It's in our nature to mess around with stuff.

Maybe you like to do puzzles, maybe you like to knit or crochet. And when things aren't tied to production, I think that's when I can call it playmaking, as opposed to making it as work. What can you play-make that would feel light and fun and interesting for you? I think playmaking time feels restful for me.

Another form of rest... By the way, all these ideas, I'm also drawing from suggestions that were given by Tricia Hersey in the book *Rest Is Resistance*. Another idea, another form of rest could be connective time. That's the time that we take to connect to other beings, human or not. Maybe if you have pets, playing with your pets, it's connective time. You're able to connect to other beings.

Calling a friend and having a nice friend chat. Spending time with your partner, not doing something productive, but just enjoying each other. You're doing something fun with somebody else. Or just giving someone a hug. Cuddling with somebody that's available to cuddle.

All of these stimulate oxytocin in our brains. It makes us feel more whole. It makes us feel more of ourselves. Because guess what? We are here to connect. I think it's in our physical nature, as well as spiritual nature, to connect with others.

Oh, of course, I left out a really important part of connective time, which is connecting to nature. We are part of nature. I know that many of us feel

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rested and restored when we have the ability to take a walk in the park, take a walk in the woods, go look at the river, the water, the sea.

What is something that you can connect to, or who is someone that you can connect to, even if it's as simple as a hug or a cuddle or a snuggle, or a phone call? Having someone over for tea? Connective time feels restoring, feels restful. It can be, certainly; not always fit. We're looking for ideas, right? So, ask yourself what feels connective in a nourishing way.

Another idea about how you can rest, is what I'm going to call spiritual time. When I talk about the idea of rest as restoration; oh, the word "rest" is in the word restoration. I literally just realized, rest-oration. Part of it is that we are spiritual beings. I believe that we are physical beings, emotional beings, intellectual beings, but we're also spiritual beings.

And when we do things that feed our spirituality, I think that feels restful and restorative. So, if you have your own spirituality, it could be just taking a moment for prayer. It could be lighting some incense, lighting a candle, and taking a few minutes to be with the divine; however you define that for you.

Maybe it feels like going to a service, if you're the kind of person to go to services. Maybe it could be doing a magic ritual. My favorite, though, is just a few moments of prayer, connecting to that which is greater. Because it doesn't require equipment, it doesn't require that I have to go somewhere, and sometimes that's the most accessible thing. So spiritual time, or rather, a time that you're spending connected to Spirit could be restful and restorative.

Now, the next idea that I have is what I'm going to call "animal-body" time. Animal-body time is quite literally doing things that enliven and restore the animal-bodies within us. We are all just animals. We're mammals, right? We don't exist just to think and to produce, we exist to move. A lot of people find movement restorative.

When I have the wherewithal, or to be able to, go for a workout or even just a walk... When I take the time to go for a 20-minute walk, that feels

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restorative. It restores a certain part of me. It's not the same thing as lying down and taking a nap.

Once again, a totally valid form of rest, but moving your body somehow, getting a sweat on... Does that make sense, getting a sweat on? Getting sweat out; sweating.... It's things that make you feel like 'huh, I'm a mammal. I'm moving my body.' That feels restive and restorative.

The next idea that I have is what I'm going to call "protected time." Now, how much time do you have to yourself, where, even if it's just for a few moments, you're not beholden to anybody? You're not at anybody else's beck and call? You're not obligated to anyone? No one's allowed to bother you, and you're just allowed to be?

I think, protected time can be harder to create for some of us because we struggle with boundaries. I think of myself as somebody who's pretty damn good at boundaries.

But even so, I can easily slip into a way of being where I constantly feel like I exist to serve other people. I exist to make other people's lives feel more comfortable. To add value to other people's lives. Even when literally no one's knocking on my door telling me, "Hey, you have to do this for me." It's more like an internal pressure, right?

And so, I asked myself, "How much time do I have to myself that is absolutely protected from anyone else's expectation or any obligation or responsibilities?" Now, you might need to put up some boundaries to be able to create some of this for yourself.

Maybe if you've got a lot of people at home, a lot of people who need you, maybe it can be as simple as, "Okay, for the next half hour," maybe not even half an hour, maybe for the next 15 minutes, maybe for the next five minutes, "I'm going to be in this room, and no one's allowed to knock. My phone's going to be off. Someone else is going to take care of whatever needs for the next 15 minutes. I am just going to close my eyes, and no one can ask anything of me."



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Something like this, where you're able to give that to yourself. If you can draw the boundaries around it, that's probably a really restful and restorative thing to do. Protected time that is protected by the boundaries that you set. Where I think, probably a lot of us can manage just a few moments of it a day. I think that'll make a difference.

The last thing I want to suggest is something that I am actively exploring and trying to get better at, and that is dopamine-free time. What I mean by that, is it's time where I am free from any kind of compulsive stimulation seeking, or exposure to any kind of compulsive stimulation.

Recently, I would say, maybe a week ago or something like that, at the time of recording, I declared a temporary social media break for myself. I haven't been posting on social media at all. I haven't been engaging. I haven't been checking my messages. I just went silent.

I am on my phone a lot less; I would say like 90% less. What I'm noticing is that even if I'm not "working" on social media, I was noticing there's so much low-key kind of pressure from the constant notifications, comments, and messages. And always feeling like there's something that demands my attention; there's another thing to read, another thing to respond to.

When I kind of wean myself off of that, which I'm able to do, I've been able to do for a week, temporarily, I found so much of my own time and energy open up. Because I'm not constantly exposed to another notification, another thing I have to respond to.

For me, this is very tied into my social media usage. Just my general being unplugged from this endless drip of stimulation, and less drip of tiny little things that feel urgent; that I have to look at, that I have to respond to. That actually aren't urgent. That I don't actually have to respond to. That I don't have to look at.

And so, right now I am experimenting with dopamine-free time, stimulation-free time. That feels very restful and restorative for me, indeed. And I think that when I go back onto social media, I'm going to negotiate a

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form of this where I'm not just exposing myself to a constant drip all day long, every waking minute.

It's hard for someone who has businesses online, for whom it's not just work. There's a lot of connection and a lot of learning, a lot of just interesting things that I genuinely want to do that are available on social media, it's available online.

And so, for someone like me, and probably for many of you listening, it's going to have to be something that you intentionally negotiate, right? It's not all or nothing, so how am I going to give myself at least some time where my brain can rest, free from just endless, compulsive stimulation?

Which, by the way, is what the algorithms are meant to do. The way social media is set up, it's meant to be an endless, endlessly compulsive drips of stimulation. And so, how do I intentionally create space where I can opt out of that? At least in ways that are intentional, not all or nothing.

So, I've just laid down some ideas for how we can make rest more accessible for ourselves. I hope that, in what I just listed, you can find at least a few ideas where resting doesn't involve more consumption. You don't need to go and buy bath bombs or whatever. You don't have to spend money to book a fancy vacation, that not everyone has access to.

You don't necessarily have luxurious stretches of time, hours, days, weeks, that you can just take off. Not many of us have those luxuries, those privileges. If you do, that's amazing and I hope that you take advantage. But even if you don't, I'm hoping that you're able to find at least some ideas where you can start to give yourself a little bit more, maybe even if it's just a few minutes a day, of time that is actually restorative to the entire being that you are.

You don't exist to produce. You don't exist to work. You exist to play. You exist to nap and rest. You exist to connect to other beings. You exist as a spirit to connect to that which is greater. You exist as a body.

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All of these ways we can fuel ourselves. When I think about it that way, rest becomes so much more expansive, and so much more accessible. I'm offering this to you during the end of the year season, as well as to myself, so that we can take a few moments to think about what this means for us. To be able to carve out a little bit more at a time.

Because remember, there is no done. There is no perfect way this looks like. There's no such thing as someone figuring it out perfectly. Something Tricia Hersey talks about a lot; no healing journey, no one's rest is cookie-cutter. Create a path that works for you, that is informed by your unique history, your unique needs, and what your unique gifts require in order for you to be able to give more from the totality of who you are.

So, I hope that helps. I hope you have a good rest, restorative end-of-the-year days, and I'll talk to you next time.

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