

Make the Most of Your Breaks

Building Recovery into Your Workday

At Exos, we believe that Work + Rest = Success, meaning that while work is important, we also know rest and recovery are critical parts of succeeding at work. But everyone is unique in their recovery needs; there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution. So, we wanted to provide a tool to help you maximize your workday breaks no matter what type of recovery you need.



The Importance of Breaks

Think about your cell phone; if you're using your phone all day and never charging it, by the time your day ends, that battery will be really low. Now, same scenario, but say you plug it in for five to ten minutes every couple of hours. Your battery won't be full at the end of the day, but it also won't be dead. The cell phone is you. If you go-go-go without stopping for a break, you're going to be spent at the end of the day. Microbreaks are your chance to recharge your battery for a minute. Ideally, you'd get a nice, long charge, but even short bursts are better than not charging at all. Make sense?

Understanding Regulation

A key component of healthy recovery is understanding what you personally need in the moment and having the tools to regulate. At Exos, we call this reflection (self-awareness of what you need) and regulation (the ability to shift your internal state to what you need). Regulation techniques are broken into two categories: upregulation and downregulation.

» Upregulation

Scientifically speaking, upregulation is shifting your nervous system from a more parasympathetic (rest and digest) to a more sympathetic (fight or flight) state. It is the nervous system version of getting hyped up or getting your juices flowing.

» Downregulation

Scientifically speaking, downregulation is the opposite: shifting your nervous system from a more sympathetic (fight or flight) to a more parasympathetic (rest and digest) state. So you're cooling down, getting zenned out, calming your mind... you get the idea.

Different Types of Breaks

Of course, not all breaks are created equal. Doomscrolling on your phone or filling every spare minute with checking email or chat messages won't help you to rest and recover. At Exos, we divide healthy breaks into three categories: Microbreaks, Recharge Breaks, and Regen Breaks.

- **Microbreaks:** Short, five- to ten-minute breaks. They can be upregulatory (like going for a short walk), downregulatory (like doing some deep physiological sighs), or used to refuel — ultimately, a microbreak is a short burst of what you need in the moment.
- **Recharge Breaks:** Ten- to 30-minute breaks. At Exos, we have strategic Recharge Breaks that are designed to downregulate and provide a moment of recovery during the workday but with enough time to end with some upregulation to get you focused and alert.
- **Regen Breaks:** Short for regeneration, Regen Breaks are any breaks that are designed to intentionally regulate and recover — from a training session, workday, you name it. Regen Breaks aren't timebound, so during your workday, they can be a break in the day where you have the time to get a significant amount of recovery. But both microbreaks and Recharge Breaks are types of Regen Breaks; it's an "all squares are rectangles, but not all rectangles are squares" type situation.

Finding the Right Break

How you use your break is just as important as taking one in the first place. But what should you do with that time? It depends! As we mentioned before, a key component of successful recovery is having the self-awareness to understand what you need. That doesn't have to be as complicated as it sounds. First off, let's use common sense; not every break needs to be a specific activity. If you're feeling hungry or thirsty, the best use of a break may be to go grab a snack or refill your water bottle. If you're feeling tight or sore, maybe do some massage, stretching, or foam rolling. Just think to yourself, "What do I need right now?"



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If you're feeling overwhelmed, flat, or lethargic...

You may need to upregulate. This could also be feeling sleepy or like your brain is foggy and you're struggling to concentrate. Upregulation can help get your brain ready to groove again.

5-10 Minutes

- + Listen to your favorite upbeat song — sing, dance, jam
- + Get moving! Do some stretches without holding
- + Test your balance — stand on one leg and try to spell your name with your foot
- + Upregulatory breathwork, like an inhale followed by three quick exhales (repeat five times)

10-30 Minutes

- + Go for a brisk walk
- + Add novelty by changing locations; again, natural light helps!

30+ Minutes

- + Complete a workout
- + Have a non-work-related conversation with a friend



If you're feeling overwhelmed, agitated, or irritable...

You may need to downregulate. This could also be feeling anxious, jittery, or nervous. Downregulation can soothe those nerves and level you back out.

5-10 Minutes

- + Deep sigh: take two quick inhales through your nose followed by a very slow exhale (repeat five times)
- + Sit with your eyes closed
- + Stand outside and just look around while focusing on your breathing

10-30 Minutes

- + Go for a relaxing stroll, ideally outside
- + Engage in a creative activity of your choice, like coloring or playing an instrument

30+ Minutes

- + Try a yoga class ending in Savasana
- + Complete a longer version of the above: walk, creativity, meditation, etc.
- + Take a nap — but be careful not to disrupt your night's sleep

Are you ready for a winning workforce?

Exos can help with more than just improved recovery. Learn more about how we can help you reach your employee goals at

teamexos.com/employer