Making the Most of Downtime

If you are working more and accomplishing less, you may need some downtime. Taking time to refresh and recharge both mentally and physically will improve productivity, increase resiliency, and decrease stress.

It's important to make space for downtime as your schedule allows. To use downtime effectively:

- **Keep it unstructured.** Downtime works best when you spend it doing what you want to do — even if that's nothing at all. Aim for one hour of unstructured relaxation two to three times a week. Keep in mind that it's more effective to “find” downtime than to schedule it into your day.

- **Unplug.** Avoid answering emails, texts, or calls and stay off social media. This will help you focus on whatever you have chosen to do.

- **Be unproductive.** Running errands is not downtime, and neither is working on a project that is on a deadline. The whole point of downtime is to relax and regroup.

- **Do what you love.** For some, this may mean taking a long walk; for others, digging in a garden or reading for pleasure. Downtime is for activities that relax your mind and feed your spirit.

Too little downtime may mean that you have too much on your plate. To better manage your schedule:

- **Say no.** It may be difficult to set limits on other people and their expectations. Improving your communication skills will help you set appropriate boundaries on your personal time.

- **Invest in wellbeing.** Downtime is one aspect of appropriate self-care. Other elements include eating right, exercising regularly, getting sufficient sleep, managing stress, and cultivating supportive relationships.

- **Prioritize.** Make a list of the tasks you must accomplish each day. Consider how to work through them most efficiently. If you finish with time to spare, take some downtime as a reward for a job well done.

If you struggle to find downtime or use it effectively, LifeMatters can help. Call 24/7/365.

Source: The StayWell Company, LLC