

# Give yourself a break

You're only five minutes away from more productivity **By Heather Francis**

Did you know that taking a break from work is not only good for you, but it actually boosts productivity? You don't need to take a vacation, or even take a day off, to see the results. All you need is a five-minute break from your daily routine and you can be more creative and productive.

Studies show that just taking a five-minute break and allowing your mind to relax can boost brain function and reduce mental and physical fatigue. It helps reduce stress and boredom, it can even help you become more focused.

Of course, not all quick activities we engage in can be considered a "good break." Checking social media updates will give you a short-term reward but may make you more susceptible to boredom and cause you to want more breaks, more often. As well, getting up for your fifth cup of coffee, or making a dash to the bathroom, shouldn't be considered taking a break.

To get the most out of your five-minute break you should choose an activity that not only engages the mind in a different way but requires you to be present.

## FIVE WAYS TO TAKE A FIVE-MINUTE BREAK

**1. Go for a walk** – According to Stanford research, walking can boost creative output by up to 60 per cent. You don't need to ruin your suit and work up a sweat, a gentle stroll around your building is just as beneficial if you do it with purpose. Just make sure to leave your phone at your desk.

**2. Get in touch with nature** – This isn't always easy in an urban setting, but even something as simple as sitting beside a small house plant can do the trick. To get the most out of your green time you must be present and aware of your surroundings. Try counting all the different shades of green you see.

**3. Doodle** – By letting your pen flow across the page you give your mind permission to wander and the problem-solving area of your brain a chance to rest. You don't need to consider yourself creative to doodle, the benefit is measured by the process not by what you put on the page.

**4. Listen to music** – It doesn't matter if you love classical or heavy metal – just listening to music, and really paying attention to the music that you are listening to, is an easy way to tune out the busyness of the day.

**5. Laugh** – Laughing is a great way to let go of the moment and relieve stress. Keep a funny book at your desk, download your favourite comedy podcast or tell a joke with a co-worker and share the medicine of laughter.

We're all busy and taking a break takes a bit of planning. To help remind yourself that those five minutes are important try scheduling an alarm into your phone or your computer at work. You can even take a five-minute break during lunch. Instead of feeling rushed and wolfing down your food take a deep breath before your start, try and savour every bite and appreciate every flavour. Be aware that not only are you feeding your body you are nourishing your overall wellness.

Everyone in business likes a low cost, high yield investment. So why not invest in yourself and take a five-minute break today; it is sure to pay dividends.



Contributed

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