



## 6 self-care activities to do on your lunch break.

Along with colourful leaves, sweaters and pumpkins, the fall season brings a return to the work routine. Chances are, you may be busy catching up on priorities that fell by the wayside during summer, like booking appointments. You might also be preparing for the realities of shorter days and cooler weather, including seasonal affective disorder and flu. This is especially the case if you are a parent with kids going back to school.

There's no better time than fall to build habits that support your health—both at home and at work. One strategy? Commit to taking breaks at work. One survey found that 94% of employees feel happier when they take a break during the day. Despite this, the same survey found that almost 40% of people occasionally, rarely, or never take breaks.<sup>1</sup>

Over time, the habit of working through breaks can compromise your wellbeing. Licensed psychologist Rachel Goldman says, "I think of these breaks as preventative care...we need to participate in them on a regular basis in order to manage our stress and prevent burnout."<sup>2</sup>

For the biggest break in your day—the lunch break—we recommend reserving time for self-care, whatever that looks like for you. Here are six activities to try that support better health.



### 1. Step away from your workstation

To truly maximize your break, it's important to completely disconnect from work priorities. Dr. Sahar Yousef, a cognitive neuroscientist, compares concentration to physical exercise: both use up your body's store of resources.<sup>3</sup> To recover from a sprint, you need to stop running, and the same is true for focusing on work.



### 2. Eat mindfully

Nourishing your body is a sensible use of your lunch hour. It's best for your brain and immunity to eat a healthy, home-cooked meal with colourful vegetables and lean protein. Eating slowly also improves digestion.



### 3. Take a walk

Physical activity refreshes the mind and supports general health. Psychologist Marylyn Opezzo studied the cognitive effects of taking a stroll, and she discovered that walking outdoors may enhance creativity by 60–200%.<sup>4</sup>



### 4. Meditate

Practicing mindfulness can significantly reduce stress. If you're not sure where to start, a bevy of meditation apps offer guided routines.



### 5. Take a cat nap

Lack of sleep is bad for your immunity and your mental focus, but resting for twenty minutes, or one sleep cycle, can drastically improve your health. Taking quick naps a couple of times each week may lower the risk of stroke, heart failure, and heart attack by 48%.<sup>5</sup>



### 6. Do something else you love

Reading a book, listening to a podcast, calling a friend or breaking out a knitting project can set you up to return to work feeling upbeat, inspired and refreshed.

## Your own health is part of your family's health.

Taking care of yourself not only benefits you, it also supports the wellbeing of your family. Children often aren't aware of their parents' limits, and they're not responsible for setting boundaries,<sup>6</sup> so your loved ones need you to make sure your own needs are met. Keeping your cup full improves your resilience so you can be a stronger support when it counts.



1.Tork. (2022, June 28). Grow your lunch business with Take Back The Lunch Break. Retrieved September 14, 2022 from <https://www.tork.ca/en/press-releases/take-back-lunch-break> 2.Scott, E. (2022, March 31). How to Take a Break from Work (and Why You Need To). Verywell Mind. Retrieved September 14, 2022 from <https://www.verywellmind.com/why-you-should-take-a-break-3144576> 3.Fierce Media. (2021, May 11). The Importance of Taking Breaks. Retrieved September 14, 2022 from <https://www.fiercemedia.ca/blog/the-importance-of-taking-breaks> 4.Government of Canada. (2022, February 15). Exercise and Your Brain: The Self-Care Series. The Maple Leaf. Retrieved September 14, 2022 from <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/maple-leaf/defence/2022/02/exercise-your-brain-self-care-series.html> 5.Marques, D. Cat naps: 5 health benefits of taking a siesta. Happiness.com. Retrieved September 14, 2022 from <https://www.happiness.com/magazine/health-body/health-benefits-of-cat-napping/> 6.Schwartz, D. (2021, July 13). The Importance of Self-Care for Parents. Psychology Today. Retrieved September 14, 2022 from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/adolescents-explained/202107/the-importance-self-care-parents>