



Self-Calming and Self-Recharging Activities

The following list comprises both activities that can help us calm ourselves when we feel distressed or disturbed and activities that can help us recharge ourselves when we feel disconnected or depleted. Be aware that any activity can be used excessively or counter-productively; mindfulness and presence are the antidotes to compulsive activity. This list is intended as a set of possibilities, not a list of tasks. Feel free to experiment to discern and discover your own preferences. This list is derived from Guidepost (12/27/90), a publication of the American Counseling Association; it has been amended over time. This handout was prepared by Sheila M. Reindl, Ed.D., who has granted permission to use it to the Bureau of Study Counsel, Harvard University, 5 Linden St., Cambridge, MA 02138.

- Listen to music – even just one song I like.
- Go for a walk.
- Sit on a porch or park bench.
- Exercise moderately (to experience strength, release, pleasure, or challenge, but not to lose weight or perfect my body).
- Meditate.
- Pray.
- Practice diaphragmatic breathing.
- Do stretching exercises.
- Practice yoga, or learn how to practice yoga.
- Watch the sun rise or set.
- Laugh.
- Read a book of my favorite cartoons.
- Listen to a book on tape/CD.
- Listen to a radio station I like.
- Share a hug with a loved one. (Ask someone for a hug, or offer a hug.)
- Enjoy a long, warm bath or shower.
- Concentrate on a relaxing scene, real or imagined.
- Create a collage representing “The Real Me.”
- Make a list of things I like (in no particular order, and including simple pleasures and grander ones): “What brings me comfort and joy is”
- Attend a support group.
- Write my thoughts and feelings in a journal.
- Attend an athletic event.
- Attend a concert, play, or other cultural event.
- Go to a museum, art gallery, or studio exhibit.
- Do something adventurous.
- Read a book or magazine.
- Sing, hum, or whistle.
- Swing, slide, see-saw.
- Play a musical instrument.
- Work with plants; garden.
- Learn a new skill.
- See a movie.
- Work out with weights, equipment.
- Ride a bike or motorcycle.
- Make myself a nutritious meal.
- Draw or paint; finger paint; work with clay, pottery.
- Do a crossword, sudoku, jigsaw or other sort of puzzle.
- Swim, float, wade, relax in a pool, or on a beach.
- Walk or sit by a pond, river, lake, or ocean.
- Take time to smell the roses.
- Light a candle or incense.
- Reflect on my positive qualities and capacities: “I am”
- Lie down, close my eyes, and rest.
- Relax in a whirlpool, hot tub, or sauna.
- Enjoy a cool, refreshing glass of water or juice.
- Take a nap.

- Chop wood.
- Imagine myself achieving my goals and dreams.
- Go horseback riding.
- Visit a place I enjoy.
- Enjoy the beauty of nature.
- Count my blessings: "I am grateful for"
- Play as I did as a child.
- Star gaze.
- Window shop.
- Do aerobics.
- Dance.
- Smile.
- Tell myself the loving, encouraging words I want to hear from others.
- Practice positive affirmations or mantras (e.g., "I can do this"; "One step at a time"; "Keep it simple").
- Practice radical acceptance (i.e., acknowledging and accepting what is true in the moment because denying what is true creates unnecessary, unproductive suffering; we may not like or approve of reality, and we might work to change it, but we begin by acknowledging it).
- Remind myself of what I really love.
- Attend a special workshop.
- Go sailing/paddle-boating.
- Reward myself with a gift I can afford.
- Take myself on a vacation.
- Plan a vacation.
- Practice positive affirmations.
- Enjoy time with an animal (e.g., pet a cat; walk a dog; play with an animal).
- Watch a TV show I like.
- Watch a video or DVD.
- Reflect on my successes and competencies: "I can"
- Write a poem.
- Read a poem.
- Make a bouquet of flowers.
- Get myself just a single, beautiful flower.
- Watch the clouds.
- Make myself something nice.
- Visit a park, woodland, or forest.
- Read positive, motivational literature.
- Cuddle up in a blanket.
- Phone, write, or email a friend; write a handwritten letter or note to someone.
- Go on a picnic in a beautiful setting.
- Enjoy a gourmet cup of herbal tea/decaf coffee.
- Participate in a sport, game, or other recreational activity.
- Practice a relaxation exercise (or listen to a relaxation tape).
- Treat myself to a nutritious meal at a restaurant or café.
- Participate in a hobby.
- Daydream.
- Practice the art of forgiveness.
- Use a soothing hand cream or body cream.
- Enjoy a scent in some form – an oil, perfume or cologne, hot tea or cocoa, candle or incense.
- Slow down.
- Wear something that makes me feel comfortable.
- Ask myself, "What would hit the spot?" and notice whatever comes to mind.
- Do nothing.*

*"I like that too," said Christopher Robin, "but what I like *doing* best is Nothing."

"How do you do Nothing?" asked Pooh, after he had wondered for a long time.

"Well, it's when people call out at you just as you're going off to do it, What are you going to do, Christopher Robin, and you say, Oh nothing, and then you go and do it."

"Oh, I see," said Pooh.

"This is the sort of thing that we're doing right now."

"Oh, I see," said Pooh again.

"It means just going along, listening to all the things you can't hear, and not bothering."

"Oh!" said Pooh.

Milne, AA. 1928, 1956. The House at Pooh Corner, in *The World of Pooh*. New York: Dutton Children's Books, 307.
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