

## **Hello!**

Welcome to the third issue of the ZSB's newsletter.

This time around we're talking about **rest and relaxation – taking time for yourself.**



**Take a deep breath to bring your spirit home to your body.  
(Thích Nhất Hạnh)**

*Are you in the thick of exams, or have you just finished? Are you out of energy now that it's the end of the semester, which required you to be both 'online and present'? Now it's time for you! Not that you couldn't have taken time for yourself anyhow...*

But if we're honest with ourselves, we know it can be very difficult not to lose track of ourselves, especially when things get busy. Taking care of ourselves in the truest sense of the word 'self-care' takes a back seat to other activities more often than is healthy.

## Relax!

Even remarks like this that are meant positively can contain a subtle reprimand: If I don't manage to be relaxed, what then?

And then come the questions: How do I relax? What tips and options are there? What can I do for myself?

Do I need to sit completely still for 30 minutes and try not to think of anything while my back starts to hurt and my mind circles around my to-do list? No! Especially for beginners, that would actually have the opposite effect and contribute to tension.

Relaxing can be easier than that. It doesn't have to take forever and can be incorporated into your everyday life through small actions.

## Tips and Tools

**No time to relax? If you can set aside a few minutes each day for relaxation exercises, that's often enough. It's the little things that count.**

### Breathe!

There's one relaxation tool you always have with you, no matter where you are. It is one of the simplest but most effective methods for coming (back) into the here and now and winding down: your breath. It allows you to relax within seconds. Breathing slowly and deliberately in and out through your nose not only has a positive impact on physical processes, such as the blood flow to your brain, but also leads to more relaxation and well-being in the long term.

**Try it out:** Breathe in slowly through your nose, counting to four. Hold the breath for one to two seconds. Then let it flow just as slowly and evenly out of your nose, counting to four while you do so. Wait one to two seconds between breaths before starting the cycle again with a new in-breath. After you've done this three to five times, pay attention to how you're feeling: Has your mood changed in any way?

### Get moving!

Movement and sports can also actively contribute to relaxation because they reduce the level of cortisol (a stress hormone) in the body. It doesn't matter what type of sport you choose; the main thing is that you have fun doing it. Listen to yourself and pay attention to what you need. Exercise in a way that feels good to you and take breaks when you get out of breath. Yoga, for example, is a way to bring your body and mind into harmony. This is especially true of Hatha yoga, where physical elements and positions are combined with breathing and relaxation exercises. Get out and move in the fresh air! This has numerous positive impacts because it not only relaxes you but also improves your mood.

**Make it part of your everyday activities:** Ride your bike to the library the next time or power walk to the grocery store. Taking a walk around the block at lunch time helps you feel refreshed and clears your head.

### **Go bathing.**

Being out in nature is good for 'winding down' because it has a balancing effect on us. How about taking a trip to the ocean or a run along the Elbe? A 'forest bath' somewhere green is also a good idea.

**Take a sensory walk:** To do this you pick one of your five senses, e.g. hearing. As you walk, you pay attention to everything your ear perceives – the rustling of leaves in the wind, the crunching of stones as your shoe touches the ground, conversations in the distance, birdsong. You'll be surprised by the variety of sounds. This kind of focused sensory 'perception' lets you give your head a break.

### **Kling Klang – let your mind wander.**

If there's not an actual forest nearby, you can turn on nature videos with relaxing music (recommended frequency: 432 Hz). Listen to classical music (e.g. 'Der Zauberwald – ein neuer Morgen by Jörg Stolz) or enjoy the sound of waves hitting the shore (from a music streaming service).

Let your mind wander – drink a tea and daydream about your last holiday. Or take a fantasy trip to your happy place.

### **Turn off!**

Stress, even stress we are unaware of, can have numerous causes. Especially among young adults, electronic media and electronic devices are undeniably – and sometimes without pause – among these stressors, with a 'ping' here and a screen lighting up there. Being constantly available puts your body in a state of alarm and thus under stress. How about setting some times that are mobile-phone and computer free?

**Set periods for yourself during which you turn off your devices** and are offline for a while. Or you can try to just reduce the input somewhat by turning off push notifications.

### **Try saying 'no' once in a while.**

We often think 'I have to...'. What happens if you replace this thought with 'I don't have to do anything.' And then maybe also 'I am allowed to...' or 'I want...'? Adjust your priorities and focus on your well-being and your health. Ask yourself what you really do and don't want to do. If you try to show up at every party, even your leisure time will become stressful.

**Give yourself permission to say no.** Because saying no to things that don't do you good means saying yes to yourself and your health.

### **Use a cheat sheet!**

Totally stressed and don't know what to do to get yourself back on track? For moments like this, it's good to have a list ready. **When you have a quiet moment, make a list of positive activities, tools and exercises.** Then you have it in black and white and can remember what does you good, what relaxes you and what makes you smile.

### **Practice gratitude.**

Gratitude is one of the most profound feelings. Those who feel gratitude have less capacity to get angry and feel more relaxed. What are you thankful for? Don't forget to think of the little things, or things you've come to take for granted in your life. A comfortable bed, fresh coffee in the morning, friendships, and a brief ray of sun.

**Each evening, write down three things you are grateful for that day.**

## Most importantly – try things out!

That was a lot of tips and tools. And there's also dance, music, sports, yoga, meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, qigong... As you've probably realised, the list is endless and is as individual as you are. Something that your best friend swears by might not have any effect on you. This is why you should try out a few different methods. What feels good? Where can you let go? What type of rest or relaxation suits you?

If you would like to delve deeper into the topic of relaxation and want to do something to reduce your stress level over the long term, we recommend one of the classic relaxation techniques such as autogenic training, meditation or progressive muscle relaxation. At the beginning it's a good idea to use tools and guides, such as apps (e.g. Headspace) or videos. Health insurance companies also frequently offer courses in these areas.

Once you've found something, integrate it into your life as much as possible. Create islands of rest in your everyday life – space for you and for relaxation.

And don't forget to **breathe. :)**

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## The Toolbox

Featuring in this issue: Relaxation analysis

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

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## Have you seen...?

... the sports and wellness courses offered by Hochschulsport?

... Thich Nhat Hanh: The First 8 Exercises of Mindful Breathing?

There's also the Student Counselling Office's brand new **Open-Talk Circle**, which gives you the chance to talk with other students in a relaxed setting about whatever issues you're facing.

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## What's next?

Don't miss our April issue on **how to deal with exam anxiety**.

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## Missed one of our issues?

No problem. You can find the issues on [planning your semester](#), [staying motivated](#) and [preparing for exams](#) here.

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## On Course with the ZSB

The Student Counselling Office team (ZSB) is there to support you during your studies, no matter what's happening in your life. In our **newsletter, 'On course with the ZSB'**, we want to give you ideas and information that will help you succeed during your studies.

We wish you inspiration and success!



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