

10 Ways to Prioritize Recovery

by Zara Hanawalt

It's been said that if you don't take a break, your body will take one for you — and it'll come at the most inopportune time. Rest is crucial, yet it's natural to have a hard time giving yourself the time and space to take this important step.

Healing — from stress, from trauma, from overexertion, from overwork, from illness — is something we all need to focus on in the name of overall wellness. If you don't know how to approach healing, you're not alone.

[Anna Bohnengel, MS, RD](#), a registered dietitian nutritionist, shared her best advice for anyone who is struggling to implement healing practices. Here are 10 ways to approach and prioritize healing, according to the expert.

01 Acknowledge the importance of healing

A mental reframe is the first step — because once you begin to rethink the pressure to be productive all the time, you can finally accept the importance and value of taking time to focus on healing.



Anna's tip

"In a society that prioritizes doing, productivity and exertion, making time & space for recovery is too often overlooked. Whether recovering from an illness or an injury, or more routine recovery from working out or dealing with the stressors of modern adulting, it's essential to build in intentional time to rest and reset."



02 Be intentional about your rest

And if you struggle with giving yourself permission to rest, consider pre-scheduling breaks.



Anna's tip

“The key to routine recovery is building in intentional rest before you feel too worn out or get sick. This simple act is often the most effective way to kickstart your recovery. This means active rest, like taking days off of vigorous exercise and taking rest days with gentle movement like light yoga or walking. Light movement can enhance blood circulation, helping to deliver nutrients where they're needed and speeding up recovery.”

03 Sleep more

The key to giving your body the rest it needs? Sleep. A lot.



Anna's tip

“Making sure you give your body enough time in the sack and white space on your calendar when you commit to the radical act of doing nothing. Sleep is critical for recovery. It's the time when your body repairs itself. Aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep per night.”



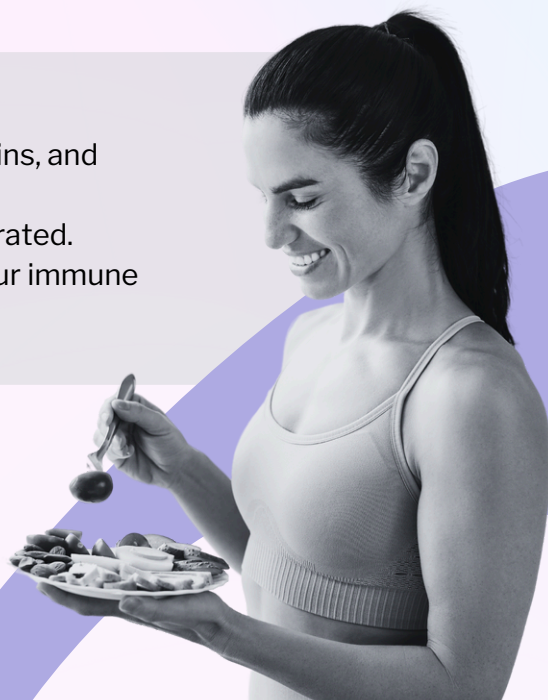
04 Think about what you're eating

You've heard it once and you're about to hear it again: Nutrition matters, and it can help your body heal.



Anna's tip

“Focus on a balanced diet rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals to support healing. Include plenty of fruits, vegetables, and proteins in your meals and stay hydrated. Proper nutrition speeds up recovery by boosting your immune system and replenishing your energy stores.”



05 Not all foods affect your recovery the same way

Balance is key, and sometimes eating a cookie can be exactly what your soul needs. But it's also important to understand how certain foods can affect your overall recovery.



Anna's tip

"Certain foods can impede recovery by promoting inflammation and causing oxidative damage. Processed foods high in sugars and unhealthy fats, think fast foods, baked goods that never go bad, and deep fried indulgences, can all increase inflammation throughout the body, slowing down the healing process."



06 Take a deep breath. Literally.

Belly breaths can be healing, and this is a way to add small opportunities for healing into your day-to-day life.



Anna's tip

"The simple act of taking deep breaths enhances oxygen flow throughout the body, which can help speed up the healing process and facilitate the removal of toxins."

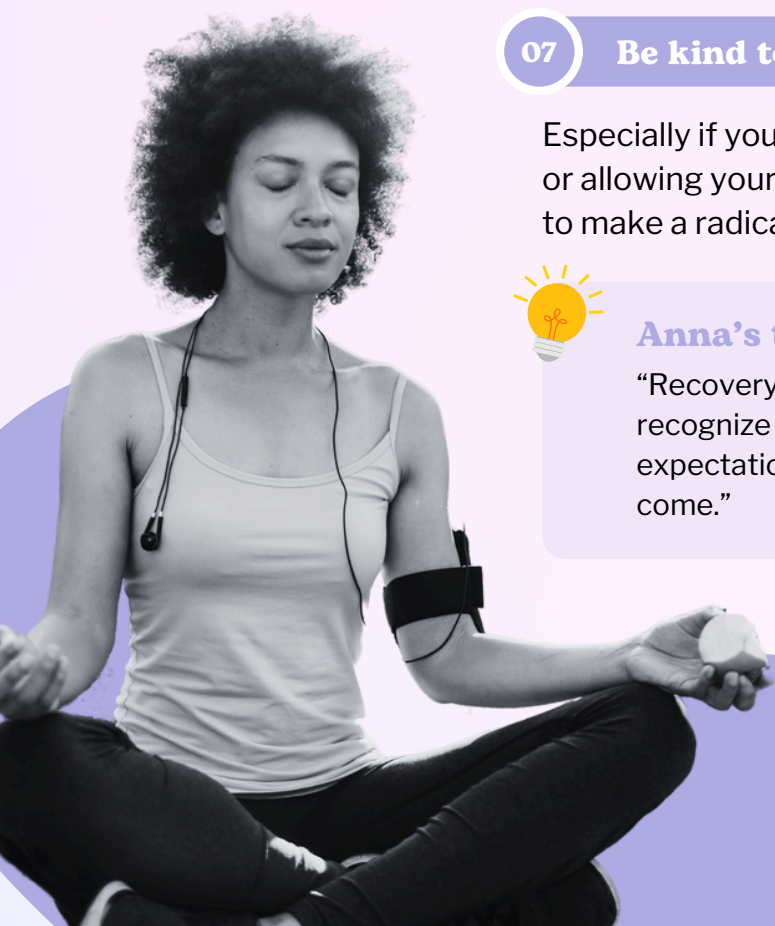
07 Be kind to yourself.

Especially if you're someone who struggles with taking a break or allowing yourself time to rest, understand that you don't need to make a radical change overnight.



Anna's tip

"Recovery can vary greatly among individuals. It's important to recognize that it's a process that may not be linear. Set realistic expectations and celebrate small improvements as they come."



08 Embrace gentle movement

We've been conditioned to think only high-intensity exercise "counts" or is "worth your time". That's not the case. Recovery and slow movement are important too.



Anna's tip

"Gentle forms of movement like walking, stretching, and light yoga can significantly promote recovery by increasing blood circulation and reducing stiffness. These activities help deliver nutrients to repair tissues and remove waste products more efficiently. On the other hand, high-intensity exercises such as heavy weightlifting, sprinting, or any form of high-impact sports should be avoided during the recovery phase. These intense activities can exacerbate injuries or strain the body, delaying healing and potentially leading to further complications. Opting for low-impact, moderate activities is key to supporting the body's recovery process without overburdening it."

09 Work on your mental health

Because yes, it is as important as your physical health — and plays a vital role in recovery.



Anna's tip

"Just like you schedule in physical exercise and healthy meals, your mental health needs regular maintenance. Also just like with physical exercise in which there are many ways to do it, and the best one is the one you will actually DO, there are many ways to achieve nervous system regulation. Whether it's breathwork, meditation, journaling, vagus nerve stimulation, yoga — the point is that you find something you enjoy enough to DO it, and do it routinely."

10 Ditch the guilt

Rest days are good for you....yet when you're plagued with guilt every time you give yourself and your body a chance to focus on healing, you're undoing a small part of that benefit.



Anna's tip

"The best way to combat guilt around rest is to recognize that our "go-go-go" culture is a recipe for burnout. Strength training is the perfect analogy. When you lift weights, your tear muscles. The muscle strengthening happens on the rest days, when the tissues repair and grow back stronger. Similarly, if you're learning something new by studying hard all day, it's when you're asleep that the learnings actually get stored into your brain."