

# After-Work Decompression Routine

## Decompressing is Essential

As educators and school staff, it can be hard not to bring your work home with you. This compounded with tasks and responsibilities outside the classroom can result in overwhelming workload and stress. Decompressing at the end of the day, and scheduling in downtime, is an effective way to help keep stress at bay and make life enjoyable. Most importantly, it can guard against burnout. While self care may, at times, seem selfish, it is needed to remain a healthy and effective educator or school staff member.

## The Basics: What Needs to be in Place First

### Manageable Workload:

This might be a challenging aspect to master initially, and may take some time and experimentation, but to truly decompress you should find a way to organize your time and responsibilities, so you're not stuck in a loop of an endless To-Do list. Taking control of this aspect of your life can help buffer a lot of the stress and anxiety you might be feeling. Some suggestions for aiding in productivity and time management are listed below:

### The 80/20 Rule

Based on the Pareto Principle, which was originally applied to economics, this 80/20 principle focuses on the idea that 80% of your outcomes come from 20% of your efforts. This can be a helpful guide when applied to productivity. Find what tasks or effort is giving you the greatest results and focus your energy accordingly. Tackle tasks that give you the greatest results, and they are often the ones you are most avoiding. By accomplishing these tasks, you will walk away with a great sense of accomplishment.

**(Lifehack)**



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## **Chunking**

An endless to-do list that keeps growing can be very overwhelming. Try to break everything up into chunks and address each chunk, and only that chunk, on certain days. This is especially useful if you find you're often forgetful and miss details. When things are well organised into chunks, the human mind holds them as one memory item, so you are no longer trying to remember 20 things, but perhaps only 4 main things made up of 5 parts! ([SmallBizTechnology](#))

## **Relax Your Mind, Body and Soul:**

All of us are unique and relax in different ways. Take some time to get to know yourself and think about the activities and hobbies that you most enjoy and help feed your soul. It's important to find ways to keep all aspects of yourself balanced and healthy. Consider, what helps your mind relax? Perhaps less screen time and more books, maybe more movies and less news articles. What helps your body relax? Maybe more mindful breathing, long bike rides or jogging. Some of us may find contentment in art and others in more extreme sports. No one thing will work for everyone, so make sure you're engaging in the things that work for your most authentic self.

## **Decompression Routine**

A decompression routine takes some effort, especially before it starts to become a habit. You will need to assert some boundaries and cut yourself some slack. Time is not boundless and introducing any new routine will require you to limit time elsewhere. Be realistic about your workload and time, you're only human and you can't do everything. While it is well worth the effort, a decompression routine shouldn't turn into something that is causing you even more stress. Knowing your boundaries and limits in all aspects of life is important, but you may not always adhere to your perfect decompression routine each week, and that's okay.



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## Weekly Decompression Routine

### **Mindful Monday:**

This is the first day of the work week, so ease into it with a calming and mindful Monday activity. Mindfully utilising your senses has psychological proven benefits to improve mood, enhance your perceptions, and create a calming reaction within the nervous system. A good idea is to take a leisurely nature walk, block all notifications on your phone and put on your favourite music. Notice everything you hear and smell, maybe even take off your shoes, so you really experience the sensation of the cool grass on your feet. Breathe deeply and let this time in nature ground you.

### **It's Been Too Long Tuesday:**

How long has it been since you've spent any time with yourself, or doing something you really love? It may sound counterproductive but engaging in a new hobby, or an old hobby that you once enjoyed is a great idea. Doing something that is solely for you, and no one else can be quite satisfying. Holding reverence for that special part of yourself helps with overall contentment. It can also spark some creativity and passion back into your life that you may even want to bring into the classroom!

### **Over the Hump Wednesday:**

You're in the middle of the week, and you may start to feel lethargic. Try and do a task that will give you a strong sense of accomplishment to feel reinvigorated. Before you unwind, do the small tasks that get burdened halfway through the week. Put the dishes in the dishwasher, pick up abandoned toys or other objects, or perhaps put the laundry away. Doing these things will remove the clutter from your space, but also your mind. You are now able to exercise control over your environment by tidying up, which may seem like an impossible task to accomplish in the classroom or school, but it can be achieved at home. Taking 5-10 minutes at the end of the night to tidy your space will give you the room that you need to breathe and reset for the next day.

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## Thoughtful Thursday:

You're getting to the end of the work week now. Perhaps it's time for some much needed indulgent self-care. Self-care looks different for everyone, so try to find something that feels relaxing and create a ritual out of it. Perhaps, create a mini spa experience in your bathtub with essential oils, candles or wine/sparkling water. If you love to cook, devote time to an elaborate and delicious meal with a decadent dessert. If you love to read, create your dream reading nook with tons of pillows, soft music and plenty of calming teas. Whatever you do, it should be something good for the soul and perhaps something that made you feel guilty about in the past because you were treating yourself. Do it now and check the guilt at the door!

## Friday Funday

Now the real fun begins! Schedule in some fun for the weekend or the upcoming week. It does not have to be anything glamorous, but just something where you have thought, "I'd love to do that, but I just don't have the time." Make the time! Engaging in fun activities can actually improve your motivation, reduce stress, which in turn can improve your memory, concentration, and even help you feel more energetic and youthful. Now is the time to plan a romantic date with a partner, a fun night out with friends, or see that new movie everyone's talking about. If you'd rather stay in, consider putting on your guilty pleasure music, so you can dance and sing along. Watch a comedy special that will have you in stitches. Time will continue to pass, don't wait to start doing things that bring enjoyment to your life.

## **Tailor a Decompression Routine**

Feel free to mix and match these suggestions in any way you see fit. It might work better for you to be productive on Monday, do something fun on Wednesday and then focus on self care on Friday. Introduce different activities and spend as much time on them as you need.

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## Final Thoughts

Decompression is good for your overall well being.

Guilt has no place here! You deserve this time and sense of peace.

Decompressing should be alleviating your stress, not adding to it.

Practising decompression is well worth the effort!

It may take some time for you to train yourself to relax, but just keep trying until it's a healthy part of your lifestyle.

