A few minutes of downtime can help relieve stress and boost productivity.

Our days are wall-to-wall. Between work and life responsibilities, we’re feeling more pressure and a higher level of stress. And it’s taking its toll on our health as a nation. So what can we do about it? Maybe, for a few minutes, we can take a break. Because a little down time — be it a five-minute timeout or a walk at lunchtime — can be a great way to recharge and reduce stress.

Ways to take a break for stress relief

Be present
Slow down. Take five minutes and focus on one behavior. For example, walking. Be mindful of how it sounds when your feet hit the ground. Feel the muscles moving to make each step.

Decompress
Place a warm heat wrap around your neck and shoulders for 10 minutes. Close your eyes and relax your face, neck, upper chest and back muscles.

Laugh out loud
A good belly laugh lowers cortisol, your body’s stress hormone, and boosts endorphins, which help your mood. Lighten up by tuning in to your favorite comedy, reading a funny book or chatting with someone who makes you laugh.

Crank up the tunes
Research shows that listening to soothing music can lower blood pressure, heart rate and anxiety. Create a playlist of peaceful songs or nature sounds.

Meditate
Just a few minutes of meditation can help relieve anxiety and may even make you more resilient to stress. It’s easy.

Get moving
All forms of exercise, from walking to cross-fit training, release feel-good chemicals in your brain that can help ease depression and anxiety.

Reach out
Talk to family and friends -- preferably face-to-face, or at least on the phone. Share what’s going on.

Tune in to your body
Mentally scan your body to sense how stress affects it. Lie on your back or sit with your feet on the floor. Start at your toes and work your way up to your scalp, noticing how your body feels.

Be grateful
Keep a gratitude journal to help you remember the things that are good in your life. Celebrate all your everyday accomplishments.

Breathe deeply
Take a five-minute break and focus on your breathing. By practicing deep breathing, you can reduce the effects of stress by slowing your heart rate and lowering your blood pressure.