

Hi, everyone,

Welcome to the Week One Rest, Recover & Play tip. Today's tip in this week's Play Tip is all about role of rest and recovery in increasing productivity.

Pleasure and social connection have a huge influence on our well-being. The activities we perceive as pleasurable release chemicals in our body such as endorphins and oxytocin that have positive health effects. There are many reasons to prioritize pleasure in your life, but it can be an easy thing to forget in the midst of work, home, school, and other obligations.

However, integrating periods of rest, play, pleasure, and social connection into your life can actually increase your productivity and help make your goals a reality. This is something top athletes know well. Strategic recovery is well known as an essential element to elite physical performance.

James Loehr (pronounced "Lair"), a renowned performance psychologist, took what he learned from working with top athletes and wrote a book about how those same principles support top performance in work and in life. In his book, *Toughness Training for Life*, Dr. Loehr lays out an evidence-based strategy for maximizing performance based on alternating periods of stress and recovery.

He talks about the need for recovery not only from physical exertion, but mental and emotional exertion as well. Recovery does not always equate to "rest," however. Recovery is achieved through contrast. If you've been active, choose non-physical, or passive, recovery like reading a book or taking a nap. But, if you've been sitting at a desk most of the day, you need active recovery like yoga, walking, or other low-intensity physical activity.

What about recovery from emotional stress? Ideally, spend some time away from all the emotional stressors. You might also try journaling your emotions, decreasing brain activity through meditative activities, or using humor and laughter.

For mental recovery, try to find contrast. If you've been in a period of intense creativity, switch to something more linear, like proofreading. If you've been listening, try talking. If you've been thinking, try doing.

When I have a long day of consulting with patients, for example, I like to take some quiet time outdoors in nature. When I've been taxing my mind on complex, strategic thinking, I like to play with my daughter, cook a meal, or take a sauna.

On a larger scale, I make sure to take at least one day a week where I do not think or talk about work, check email, or do anything work-related. I also take an annual vacation where I unplug from all work activities for at least ten straight days to play, rest, and reconnect with my family.

This kind of strategic recovery recharges your mental, emotional, and physical batteries and is essential to creating the rhythm of sustainable, top performance week after week.

Okay, that's it for now. See you next week!