

Constructive Rest – an easy Alexander Technique Mind/Body Practice for Calming, Stress, Pain, Fatigue, Mood Elevation & other benefits

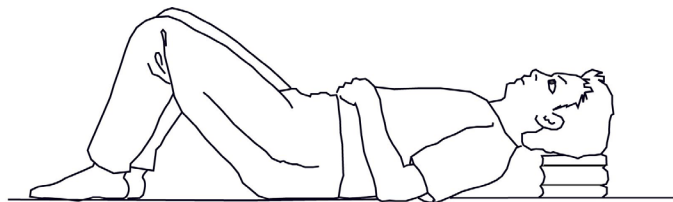
Endorsed in “O - the Oprah Magazine”, *Constructive Rest* is a self-directed Alexander Technique practice that feels great and requires no skill or effort. All you need to do is set aside 10-20 minutes, find a quiet spot on a firm surface - the floor or a massage table, not your bed ! - put a few paperback books under your head and you’re good to go. ***Benefits include:***

- Calming and stress & anxiety reduction – which builds over time with regular practice
- Mood elevation - and a quick “pick-me-up” that relieves fatigue and helps you regain energy
- Takes pressure off the spine, eases compression from being upright - and helps restore full height
- Gentle release and pain relief for the neck, back, spine, shoulders, hips and pelvis
- Allows ribcage to expand, and makes breathing more regular & relaxed
- Allows muscles and joints to release excess tension
- Improved ability to handle many types of physical and mental stress
- Increased mindfulness and self-awareness

Wear loose-fitting clothes. In a quiet place where you will not be disturbed, lie on your back on a firm surface with your feet flat and your knees bent and pointing up towards the ceiling. Carpeted or non-slip surfaces are best. Place feet flat, about shoulder width apart as close to your body as possible, without straining.

Place one or more small paperback books with ½” - 2” spines under the bony ridge at the back of your skull. Book height varies with each person and each *Constructive Rest* session. NOTE: *Books should not be in contact with your neck.* [See illustration] *The head should be neutrally balanced on the books - not tipped forward or backward.* *If the books feel too hard, add a washcloth or other piece of soft fabric for cushioning.*

Once you find a comfortable book height, rest your elbows on the floor at your side and place your hands resting gently palms-down on your lower ribs.



The basic Constructive Rest position

Bring your awareness to your body and do a mental “*Body Scan*” throughout yourself. Keep your eyes softly open without straining them. Observe any tension or straining. Without moving, gently allow yourself to release any areas of strain - from the arms, shoulders, neck and back to your feet, knees, elbows and hands.

Allow yourself to rest quietly and relax gently into the surface that you are lying on - without moving, or “doing” anything. Think of gravity giving you a gentle massage as you lie still and quiet. ALLOW your body weight to be evenly distributed on your body’s weight-bearing points - back, spine, ribcage, shoulder blades, pelvis, buttocks, and feet – which are in soft contact with the floor.

Imagine that you have an “*Inner Positioning System*” (*IPS*) - similar to the *Global Positioning System* (*GPS*) used in your car. “Locate” your body in the 3-D space and environment that you are in, from every direction.

As you rest on the floor, silently “cycle through” the following directions to yourself:

- ***While I breathe gently and fully, my feet are flat & still and my knees point up and are balanced.***
- ***I allow my ribcage to relax and keep my eyes softly open.***
- ***I “free my neck”, and allow my head to release as my neck & spine lengthens along the floor.***
- ***I release my jaw, allowing my mouth and jaw to be softly open without straining.***
- ***I allow my back and spine to release, and continue to lengthen and widen along the floor.***
- ***I continue to bring mindful awareness to myself, I allow myself to gently rest on the floor.***

No effort is needed for *Constructive Rest* beyond gently keeping yourself quiet & still, with your knees up and balanced, feet flat, and your eyes softly open. For your first few *Constructive Rest* sessions, start with at least 10 minutes at a time, building up to 20 minutes. *Constructive Rest* promotes mindful awareness and teaches us how to self-soothe along with a variety of other benefits such as: relief of fatigue, stress, anxiety and pain; regulating breathing – and allowing the spine and neck to lengthen, and to give ourselves a break from gravity.

Note: If you fall asleep or realize you’ve been daydreaming for awhile, bring your mindful attention back to your body and sense your weight-bearing points. If you often fall asleep when doing Constructive Rest, you may need more sleep.

Getting up from Constructive Rest – roll onto one side and take your time!

- Gently remove the books from under your head and allow your head to rest on the floor or table you are on.
- Gently turn your head and slowly roll onto one side. Do not stiffen your neck, spine, back or stomach muscles.
- While still on your side, place your hands palms down by your head & chest. Gently push yourself up to a sitting position.

Frequently asked questions

Q: Is Constructive Rest similar to yoga or meditation? No – however, over time a regular *Constructive Rest* practice generates benefits similar to yoga and meditation including: calming & balancing of the nervous system; fatigue and pain relief; better ability to deal with physical & mental stress; and increased awareness, focus and detachment.

The aim of Constructive Rest is not to sink into total relaxation, or into a meditative state of mind. Constructive Rest is a practice that requires mental alertness as you learn to be aware of your body while gently allowing gravity to promote release of tension in muscles and joints as you lie on the weight-bearing points of your body.

Q: How often and how long is best for Constructive Rest ? Twice a day for 10- 20 minutes a day is best; even 10 minutes once a day is helpful if you cannot find more time.

Q: Can I listen to music with my iPod, watch TV, read, text or use my laptop while in Constructive Rest ? *Constructive Rest* teaches us how to self-soothe and “be quiet with ourselves” – while promoting permanent calming and balancing of our nervous system. Listening to music without headphones is OK - any of the other activities listed above cause strain and holding of the eyes, neck and head in positions that prevent release of tension, and can strain muscles & joints.

Becca Ferguson teaches **Mindfulness-Based Alexander Technique (MBAT)** – a fusion of easy Mindfulness methods with the Alexander Technique - a safe, evidence-based mind/body self-care practice for all ages & abilities. MBAT provides a simple physically-based framework for recognizing and creating choices for changing reaction & movements that can cause stress, anxiety, pain, and self-defeating habitual behaviors .

Becca is certified with AmsAT- the American Society for the Alexander Technique. She is based in the Champaign/Urbana and Chicago area, and teaches private lessons and classes for stress management, relapse prevention, pain relief, trauma and co-occurring disorders at Carle Hospital Addiction Recovery Center & the Prairie Center in Urbana. Becca guest lectures on addiction, recovery and MBAT in the U of Illinois Community Health Dept.

To learn more about Becca’s teaching, please go to her website: www.MindfulAT.com . For more information about lessons, classes, scheduling and costs please email Becca at: MindfulAlexander@gmail.com or call: 224.239.5741.

NOTE: Constructive Rest was developed by Frederick M. Alexander, creator of the Alexander Technique. **Constructive Rest** is known world-wide in different Alexander Technique teaching settings by a various names: “Semi-Supine”, “Balanced Rest” and a “Lie Down”. Though names vary, the basic practice & benefits are the same.

The Alexander Technique, Mindfulness Practices and MBAT are not medical treatment – they are evidence-based alternative health and wellness practices used in Integrative Medicine and Behavioral Health settings. Consult your healthcare provider prior to practicing MBAT.