

Mindful Alexander Technique - "Constructive Rest Practice"

Easy mind/body practice for calming, stress, pain, fatigue, mood elevation & other benefits

"Constructive Rest Practice" (CRP) is an easy self-care practice endorsed in "*O - the Oprah Magazine*". CRP requires no skill or effort, and is open to all ages and abilities. Find a quiet spot on a firm surface (floor or massage table) where you will not be disturbed, put a few paperback books under your head and you're good to go. **Benefits of CRP:**

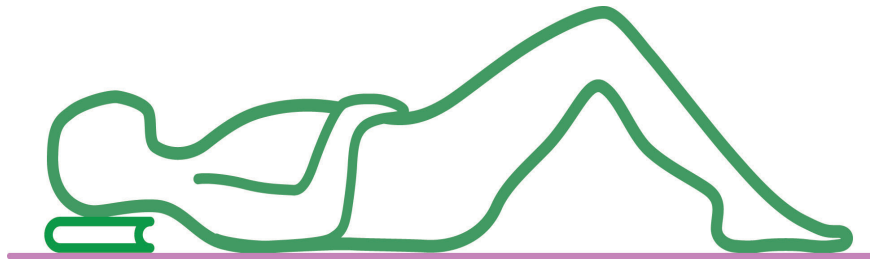
- Calming, with stress/ anxiety reduction that builds with regular practice
- Improves mood, relieves fatigue and helps you regain energy
- Takes pressure off the spine and helps restore your full height
- Gentle release and pain relief for: neck, back, spine, shoulders, hips and pelvis
- Allows ribcage to expand and makes breathing more regular & relaxed
- Allows muscles and joints to release excess tension
- Improves ability to handle many types of physical and mental stress
- Increases mindfulness and self-awareness

Getting started:

Wear loose-fitting clothes. In a quiet place where you will not be disturbed, lie on your back on a firm surface with feet flat and knees bent pointing to the ceiling shoulder-width apart. (Non-slip surfaces are best.) Place 1 or 2 small paperback books with ½" - 2" spines under the bony ridge on the back of your head.

After you find a comfortable book height, rest your elbows on the floor at your side & place your hands resting gently on your lower ribs palms-down. [See illustration below]

NOTE: Books should not be in contact with your neck. Book height varies with each person. Your head should be balanced and not tipped forward or backward. If books feel too hard, add a piece of soft fabric under your head.



Step-by-step directions for Constructive Rest Practice:

- 1) Bring awareness to your body and do a mental "Body Scan" of yourself. Notice tension or straining.
- 2) Keep your eyes softly open without straining. ALLOW your weight to distribute evenly on your back, spine, ribcage, shoulder blades, pelvis, buttocks and feet.
- 3) Allow yourself to rest quietly & relax gently into the surface you are lying on. Without moving, gently allow yourself to release strain from: arms, shoulders, neck, back, feet, knees, elbows and hands.
- 4) "Locate your body" in the space you're in - as if you are your own "Global Positioning System" (GPS).

5) Continue your "Body Scan" as you rest on the floor and silently "cycle through" these thoughts:

- *I allow my head, neck, spine and back to release and lengthen along the floor. I keep my eyes softly open*
- *My feet are flat & still with my knees pointed up and legs balanced - without straining*
- *I inhale & exhale gently through my nose and breathe into my lower ribcage*
- *I release my jaw and allow my mouth to stay open gently, keeping my jaw & mouth relaxed.*

6) No effort is needed for *Constructive Rest* beyond gently keeping yourself quiet & still, with your knees up and balanced with your feet flat and eyes softly open. Start with 10 minutes at a time and build up to 20 minutes.

Note: If you fall asleep or you've been daydreaming, bring your attention back to your body with the "Body Scan" method.

Getting up from CRP - 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 and push yourself up to sit.

Frequently asked questions

Q: *Is the Constructive Rest Practice similar to yoga or meditation ?* *No – though, 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 and focus.*

The goal of Constructive Rest Practice is not to zone out into total relaxation or fall asleep. Constructive Rest Practice works best with mental alertness as you learn to be aware of your body, while gently lying still to promote release of tension in muscles & joints.

Q: *How often/ how long is best for Constructive Rest ?* *Twice a day for 10- 20 minutes is best; even 10 minutes a day is helpful.*

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 calm ourselves, and promotes permanent calming & balancing of our nervous system.

Listening to music without headphones is OK. Any of the other activities listed above causes muscle & joint strain, as well as holding the eyes, neck and head in positions that prevent tension release in the body.

*Becca Ferguson teaches **Mindful Alexander Technique (MAT)** and is certified with **AmSAT- the American Society for the Alexander Technique**. She is based in the Chicago and Champaign/Urbana areas, and teaches private lessons, and classes for stress management, relapse prevention, trauma and co-occurring disorders at Urbana's Carle Hospital Addiction Recovery Center.*

For more information, go to the MAT website: www.MindfulAT.com or email: MindfulAlexander@gmail.com.

NOTE: "Constructive Rest Practice" 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: "Active Rest", "Semi-Supine" and "Balanced Rest". Though names vary, the basic practice is the same.

The Alexander Technique is an evidence-based health and wellness practices, not medical treatment. Consult your health provider prior to engaging in Constructive Rest Practice. © 2014 – 2015 Becca Ferguson & Mindful Alexander Technique