

# Can't Relax

A worksheet for noticing what happens when slowing down starts to feel uncomfortable or unfamiliar.



# When Stillness Feels Strange

After long stretches of being "on" - alert, scanning, moving, managing - your nervous system doesn't just switch off because the shift ended. Stillness can feel wrong. Not peaceful. Uncomfortable. Boring. Even unsafe.

That's not a weakness. It's what happens when your system has been running at high intensity for a long time. The body gets used to the pace. When things slow down, it registers the quiet as a gap to fill - or a threat to monitor.

ⓘ This worksheet isn't about fixing anything. It's about noticing - and giving yourself a smaller starting point than "fully relaxed."

# What Happens When You Try to Relax?

Check anything that shows up when you actually sit down and try to rest. You don't have to feel all of these - even one or two is worth noticing.

## Restless

Can't stay seated. Need to get up, move, do something - anything.

## Irritable

The quiet makes you short-tempered. Small things feel louder than they should.

## Guilty

Feels like you should be doing something. Sitting still feels like wasting time.

## On Edge

Hyperaware of surroundings. Hard to settle even in a safe, familiar space.

## Distracted

Mind jumps from thought to thought. Can't focus on one thing - or nothing.

## Looking for Something to Do

Reaching for your phone. Turning on the TV. Anything to fill the gap.

# What Does Relaxing Bring Up?

Sometimes it's not just about fidgeting. When things get quiet, stuff surfaces. These prompts might help you name what comes up.

## Thoughts from Work

Scenes, calls, cases - things you didn't have time to process during the shift.

## Feeling Unproductive

Rest doesn't feel earned. The downtime makes you feel behind or useless.

## Body Tension

Shoulders, jaw, chest - still tight even when you're off the clock.

## Mental Noise

The internal chatter gets louder when there's nothing else to drown it out.

## Discomfort with Quiet

Silence feels wrong - like something must be about to happen.

## Need to Check Something

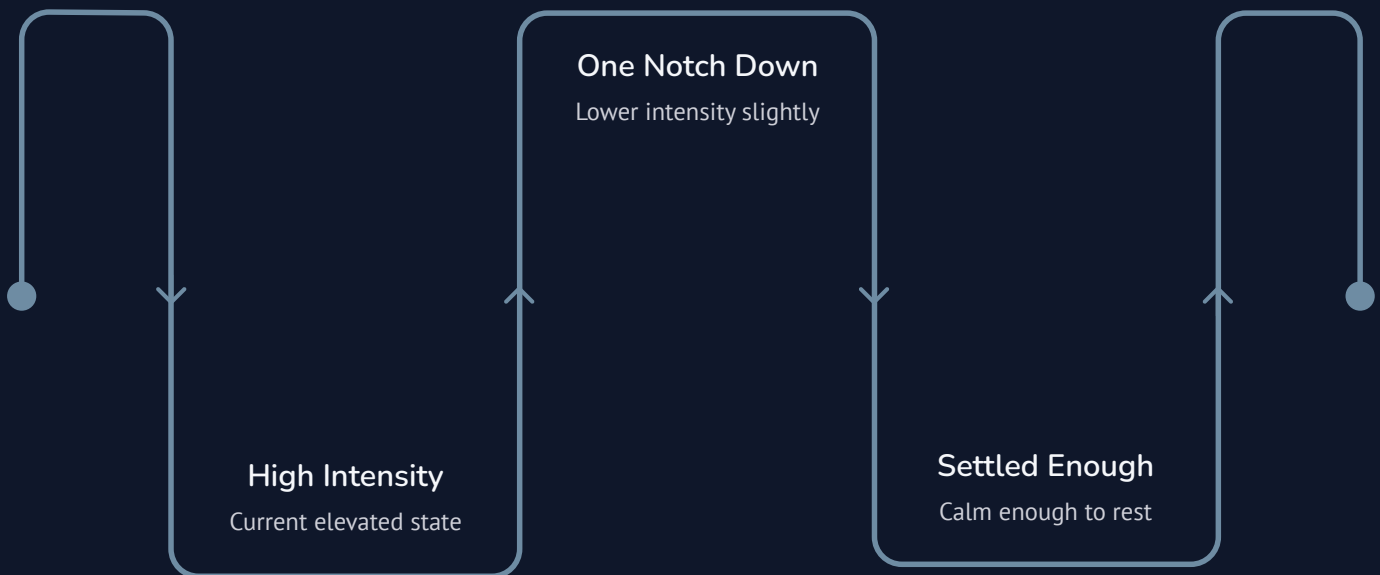
Email, news, texts. The pull to stay plugged in, even when you're trying not to be.

# Start Smaller Than Relaxing

You don't have to get all the way to "fully relaxed." That might not be a realistic first move - and chasing it when your system isn't ready can make things worse.

The real goal is simpler: **lower the intensity by one notch.** Not calm. Not peace. Just slightly less activated than you were a moment ago. That counts. That's progress.

You're not trying to turn off. You're trying to turn down - just a little. One notch at a time.



Even a small reduction in your baseline activation level gives your nervous system something to build on. You're not failing at relaxing - you're learning to shift gears in a system that wasn't built to stop quickly.

# One Small Settle-Down Step

Pick one. Just one. You don't need a plan, a routine, or a commitment. You just need something small enough to actually do right now.



## Sit for 2 Minutes

No phone. No TV. Just sit. Set a timer if it helps. Let the two minutes be the whole task.



## Slow Your Breathing

Breathe in for 4 counts, out for 6. Do it three times. That's it.



## Take a Shower

Hot water, familiar routine. A physical reset that doesn't require thinking.



## Walk Outside

Even 5 minutes. Movement without a mission. Let your eyes go wide instead of narrow.



## Put on Music

Something you know. Let it run in the background. You don't have to focus on it.



## Stretch

Neck, shoulders, back - wherever it's tight. Slow and easy. No program required.



## Put the Phone Down

Face down, other room, out of reach. Even for 10 minutes. Reduce the pull.

# Closing Reminder

## If relaxing feels hard, start with settling.

One notch down still counts.

### Remember This

Your system learned to stay alert because the job required it. That's not a flaw - it's an adaptation. Unlearning it takes time and small, repeated steps. Not one big breakthrough.

### What to Do Next

- Pick one settle-down step from the previous card
- Try it today - even for 5 minutes
- Notice what comes up without judging it
- Come back to this worksheet when you need it

- ✔ You don't have to earn rest. You just have to start somewhere small enough to actually do.

