

## SKILL BUILDING NO. 6

# Decompress the Stress

**I need a break!** Yes, your brain needs breaks, like your body after an intense activity: weight lifting, running, or after an illness. Brain breaks are for recovery when building and learning and returning yourself to a baseline stress level. Healthy physical recovery choices include rest, ice, water, or nutrition. Unhealthy recovery choices include excessive rest that weakens muscles, sitting too long without moving, and consuming sugary drinks or junk food.

Now let's translate that to your brain and understand **checking-out vs re-charging**. Smartphones, computer screens, and electronics are amazing. They grab our attention, help us get lost in amusing entertainment, connect with others, and provide easy access to research questions. These **devices help us check-out**, turn our brains off, turn stressors off, and block out problems and anxieties.

The problem with checking-out is that as soon as you break free from distraction, your stress and fatigue levels immediately come to the front of your mind. **Checking-out is OK to do, but only at the right times.**

Checking-out is like turning your phone off; when you turn it back on, you only have the same battery you had before. So instead of checking-out, let's figure out how to plug-in and fill up that brain battery.

When you need a break, it's time to re-charge and recover, not turn off. **Re-charging activities add to your rest, energy, health, and peace of mind.** Re-charging activities can be a good meal, a walk, intentional breathing, and slowing down. Even reading non-academic books for a predetermined time can help you recover. Giving stimulation to the other half of your brain will re-charge the thinking parts you use when studying, going to classes, working, and handling problems.



5-7 minutes



use weekly sheet



repeat these items often

**Do you check out when you need a break?**



**Where are you spending time checking-out that you could choose to be re-charging instead?** (ex: cat videos, TikTok, Snapchat, mindless scrolling, doom-scrolling, video games)



**1. Write down five ways to re-charge and then put them into your next weekly sheet.** Commit to trying at least one of the items today so your body and brain can learn what feeling better is like when you have work to do. If you can do this once a day (or more), you will get even better at feeling good at an even faster pace.



**Need ideas?** 2 min deep breathing, 10 minutes of laying down and doing nothing, 15-minute walk, shower or bath, lotion, meal, talking face to face or on the phone, listen to a funny podcast.