

10 Ways to Relax After a Long Veterinary Shift

1. Regulate your 'worry time'

Spend 10-15 minutes at the end of each day, going over things that are on your mind. Make the effort to write them down, think about them, and make a to-do list or action plan. Once complete, set the intention to not think about these things for the rest of the day.

2. Take a walk

Either alone or with a pet, walking outside allows the body and mind to reconnect with nature, and disconnect from work. Getting 20-30 minutes of natural light exposure also helps regulate the circadian rhythm, which promotes sleep hygiene. Time spent outdoors reduces cortisol levels and enhances feelings of happiness and joy.

3. Exercise

Moving the body has tremendous mental and physical health benefits. Spending 10-15 minutes doing high-intensity exercise or 30 minutes doing low-intensity exercise, helps the body relax and signifies sweating off the day's events. Exercise also reduces stress and helps the mind and body feel tired at the end of the day.

4. Breathe

Engaging in calm and relaxed breathing, while lengthening the duration of the exhale, helps to stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system. Focusing on the breath and noticing the expansion of the belly also reduces the fight-or-flight response.

5. Stretch

Taking time to move the body to open the hip flexors, stretch the hamstrings, and relax the shoulders can help to loosen the muscles that hold tension during the workday. If you sit for long periods, neck stretches and chest openers are also recommended.

6. Take a shower

Showering signals to the body that the day's difficulties have washed away. Water cleansing is a powerful tool for ending the work day and commencing home life.

7. Connect

Debriefing with a partner, roommate, or support person can help to process issues that come up during the day. Limit this time to 10-15 minutes to not derail the evening or make a habit of using loved ones as constant sounding boards.

8. Do something for you

Spending time on a hobby, whether it's coloring, singing, reading, knitting, or crafting can help to reduce stress. Taking time to do something just for you is necessary for self-care.

9. Meditate

Meditation is the practice of noticing thoughts, feelings, and sensations, while bringing focus back to the breath and present moment. This exercise helps to cultivate the ability to notice and let go of stressors instead of ruminating on them.

10. Listen to music

Listening to music while commuting or once at home can help to lower blood pressure, slow the heart rate, and reduce anxious thoughts. It can also set the tone for relaxing and unwinding after a shift.



@marieholowaychuk



@DrMarieHolowaychuk



@DrMarieHolowaychuk



@marieholowaychuk