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# Why Taking Extended Time Off —Like Demi Lovato—Is Good for Your Health

Knowing when to recharge your batteries is crucial to living your best life.

By Lauren Brown West-Rosenthal



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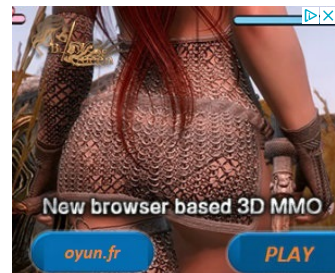
Demi Lovato asks in her hit song, "what's wrong with being confident?" and the truth is, absolutely nothing. Except it can be draining using that confidence to be "on" all the time. Turns out that Demi is ready to step away from the spotlight and turn it all off. Last night she tweeted:

Needless to say, Demi has had quite a 2016: She broke up with her longtime boyfriend Wilmer Valderrama, spoke candidly at the Democratic National Convention about her struggles with bipolar disorder, went on a hugely successful tour with Nick Jonas, got into her fair share of social media drama (including this Twitter feud with Perez Hilton), and most recently, caused a stir by dissing Taylor Swift and her squad. So, announcing a yearlong break is not as extreme as it sounds. Demi clearly needs to recharge and replenish her energy—something everyone should do. But if you don't have the same, shall we say, resources as Demi to take a year off from your life and work, don't worry. There are other ways to get your groove back.

First things first: You need to know the signs that you're running on empty. Robin H-C, behaviorist and best-selling author of *Life's in Session*, says it's important to note if you've dropped your healthy habits and have turned to "quick fixes": "You may find yourself consuming more fast food, caffeine, drinking more wine, potato chips, and quick-fix carbs become a staple in your diet," she says. "Incidentally, simple carbohydrates trigger the feel-good chemicals—endorphine-



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in the brain, which is why people are drawn to french fries and potato chip cravings during periods of stress."

You should also pay attention when you can't fall asleep at night, even when you know you should be tired, says Pax Tandon, a Philadelphia-based positive psychology expert and life coach. "This is an indicator that the body and brain are overloaded, and can't shut down, quiet down, and relax enough to fall asleep with ease," she explains. Our bodies run on adrenaline in times of high stress, and when adrenaline levels are too high, our minds and bodies are literally too doped up to relax, Tandon says. "Sleep is when vital functions are recovered, memories are consolidated, and damaged cells are repaired. This is not time we can compromise on. So if you're not sleeping well, or enough, you're in depletion mode, burning the candle at both ends. This means it's time to step back, allow more ease into your life, and recharge the batteries."

Other signs to look out for include a lack of joy with the things that would normally make you feel happy and inspired, feelings of isolation, simple tasks feeling much harder than before, and a general heaviness in your thoughts, Tandon says.

Does any of the above sound like you? Well, once you've realized that you need to slow down and take time for yourself (but still have to go to work and be there for your family), there are some easy ways to turn the situation around and prevent a total burnout which can have serious consequences on your health.

### 1. Meditate!

"Taking even one minute every half hour or hour in a busy or stressful day will keep that stress at bay. Meditation is as rejuvenating and restful for the mind and body as a long nap, and it doesn't come with the groggy side effects," says Tandon. Here's how: Simply take a "mindful body posture" by uncrossing your legs and planting your feet firmly on the ground, and allow your spine to lengthen and strengthen as you relax your shoulders back and down, allowing them to "melt heavy" toward the ground, she says. Then close your eyes, bringing your attention and awareness to your breath. Keep your mind anchored on your breath as it flows into and out of your nostrils. "This simple practice cleanses and purifies the mind, and deeply relaxes the body. If you do this repeatedly over the course of the day, you will begin to feel much more at ease and relaxed, as the stress of the day will not accumulate in your body," Tandon says. (Related: [17 Powerful Benefits of Meditation](#).)

### 2. Exercise

For a really beneficial recharge, you need to sweat. "High-octane workouts take enough of your energy and focus that it's nearly impossible to ruminate or stress out while performing them," says Tandon. "In addition, any stress that has accumulated will evaporate as you move fresh oxygen through your body." An added bonus: Clear skin. "Toxins are cleared out through the action of sweating, so your outer glow will match the inner glow you are attaining from a peaceful, balanced existence," Tandon says.

### 3. Say No

A major cause of burnout is saying yes to things at work that you don't need to take on. Gail Saltz, M.D., psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, best-selling author, and host of *The Power of Different* podcast, says it's imperative to say *no* to non-vital work projects and requests to ensure you're carving out more time for yourself. And once you have that space in your head and schedule? "Inject time to play-not work-on your weekends," Saltz suggests.

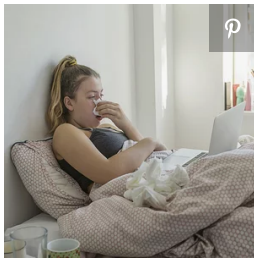
### 4. Disappear (But Just for a Day, Not Year!)

"Whenever you feel the need, take a day off where you only do what you want to do," recommends Deborah Sandella, Ph.D., author of *Goodbye, Hurt & Pain: 7 Simple Steps to Health, Love and Success*. "The body and brain both need downtime for restoration. It's amazing how much we can recharge with some downtime," she says. (Not to mention, science says habitually working long hours can put you at risk for major health issues.) And don't forget to let people know you're taking a time out and won't be taking calls/emails. Quiet helps you reset without distraction, Sandella says.

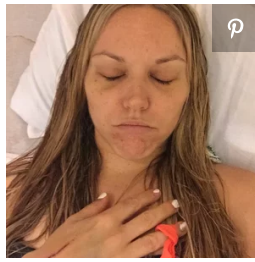
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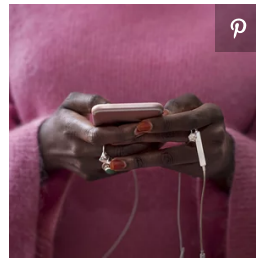
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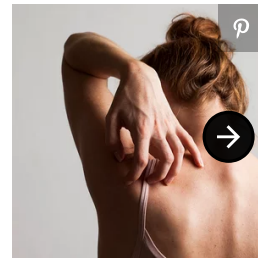
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