



We often ask ourselves, "Do I need a rest?" But sometimes what we are really craving isn't **rest** but **restoration**. Let me explain...

The Restoration Worksheet

Rest often means stepping back from activity or demands. **Restoration is the process of recovering our capacity: physically, mentally, emotionally or socially.** And that doesn't always happen by doing less. Sometimes it means moving our bodies, doing something absorbing, connecting with someone, or gently giving our thoughts and emotions some attention.

The question isn't simply, "**Do I need to rest?**" Instead, it might be more help to ask, "**what kind of restoration do I need right now?**"

This is why I created the Restoration Matrix which combines two questions:

Am I looking for less demand or gentle engagement?

and

Do I need a break from my thoughts and emotions, or do I need to gently move towards them?

Neither side is better than the other, and all four forms of restoration have their place. But different people need more or less of different forms of restoration in different circumstances.

Take a look at the Matrix and notice how very different activities can serve similar restorative purposes. And how the similar kinds of activities might be restorative for different reasons. Then we'll look at each quadrant in a little more detail.

The Restoration Worksheet

Low Demand + Moving Away From Yourself

Reducing stimulation

This kind of rest for restoration gives your nervous system permission to stop trying so hard. It is often helpful after illness, prolonged stress, grief, overwhelm, or sensory overload.

Ask yourself

- Does everything feel like too much right now?
- Would less stimulation and more familiarity feel soothing?

Gentle Engagement + Moving Away From Yourself

Gentle recovery through activity

Sometimes our minds recover better when our bodies move. These activities give the brain something absorbing to focus on without placing heavy emotional demands on us.

Ask yourself

- Am I mentally tired but finding it difficult to sit still?
- Would doing something with my body or hands help me switch focus?

The Restoration Worksheet

Low Demand + Moving Towards Yourself

Creating space for awareness

Sometimes restoration comes from slowing down enough to notice what has been waiting underneath the surface. This isn't about forcing feelings. It's about allowing them.

Ask yourself

- Is there an emotion asking for my attention?
- Would some quiet space help me notice what's underneath?

Gentle Engagement + Moving Towards Yourself

Processing and integrating experience

Sometimes restoration comes through gentle action that helps us to ground our nervous system and use up the excess energy of our emotions are creating whilst making sense of our experiences.

Ask yourself

- Is there something I need to express, understand or work through?
- Would creativity, connection or gentle movement help me process it?

The Restoration Worksheet

Reflective prompt: Which quadrant feels more restorative for you today? What's one small activity you could try?

Remember

Restoration isn't about doing everything, or always choosing the "healthy" option. And you don't have to stay in one quadrant. You might need to reduce stimulation first, then find that gentle movement helps. Or you might need connection before you have enough space to process what you're feeling.

This is not about getting the balance perfect. It is about reflexivity and gently asking yourself, again and again:

"What would leave me feeling more restored than I do right now?"

Learning to answer that question with kindness may be one of the most valuable forms of self-care we ever practise.