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The problem with many “tried and true” stress-relief strategies is that they often don’t help, and they can do more harm than good, says author Arin N. Reeves.



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If you're feeling burned out, you may have considered meditation. Or maybe you've done breathing exercises or squeezed a nap into your day. The problem with these "tried and true" stress-relief strategies is that they often don't help, and they can do more harm than good, says Arin N. Reeves, author of *In Charge: The Energy Management Guide for Badass Women Who Are Tired of Being Tired*.

Reeves compares burnout to being on a lake in a canoe that is leaking. Once you notice the hole, you start scooping out the water. You spend hours scooping. Then your friends tell you, "You look tired. You need to exercise more. You need to eat better. You need to go home and get more rest," Reeves says. "But it's so that you can get back in that canoe tomorrow and keep scooping up that water."

The problem with a lot of self-care strategies is that they start in the middle. They don't question whether you should be in a canoe that has a hole in it. They assume that you'll keep doing what you're doing and working the way you're working. Self-care strategies don't work because you will wake up the next day and be tired again.

"It doesn't matter how much you sleep, it doesn't matter how much you take care of yourself, burnout won't go away because the burnout is the air that you're breathing every day," Reeves says. "Self-help strategies are not helping us by asking, Is what I'm doing sustainable?"



MANAGING YOUR ENERGY

Instead, helpful self-care strategies look at your energy management. In your job or your life, Reeves says it's important to pay attention to what gives you energy. It can be certain types of work that you do, certain people you work with, or it can be things you enjoy doing outside of work.

"Pay attention for three to four days and stop every hour and run your energy on a scale of 0 to 10," Reeves advises. "Watch what leads you to the sevens and eights and the nines on that scale. And what leads you to the twos and the threes and the fours."

What gives you energy can change over time. "Something that gave you energy when you were 25 may not give you energy when you're 31, depending on what additional responsibilities you have in your life," Reeves notes.

Look at your day and see what you can control. If possible, start your day with things that you enjoy. Starting out with tasks that give you energy can leave you with more energy at the end of the day.



minimize your energy-draining tasks. For example, you could try to counterbalance them by doing something positive afterward.

“This approach allows us to take a hold of the reins of our energy management,” Reeves says. “If you end every day in a deficit of energy, no amount of yoga or meditation will fix it. It will feel even more oppressive because it’s one more thing on your list to do. Energy management is self-care. Ending your day with a surplus of energy, as opposed to a deficit, is taking care of yourself.”

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