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Health TriAngle

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Health Focus
Frozen Shoulder

Building a Brain That Ages Well

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A QUIET *Sunday* EVENING

by **Prof. Dr. Anabel Ternès von Hattburg**

Rest Revolution

Elena, age 27, sits in her small flat in Berlin. The sunlight is fading; she's just sent the tenth message of the day to her team about a project due in two days. Her phone buzzes—another Slack notification. She checks her email. Her back aches, her mind feels heavy, and she wonders: Did I ever stop working today? She scrolls through Instagram, sees friends posting seaside photos, captions like "Taking a break"—and feels a twinge of guilt. Because rest, for her, feels like failure.
Elena is part of what many call **The Burnout Generation.** For Gen Z and younger Millennials, rest has ceased to be a luxury - it feels like rebellion.

WHAT WE MEAN BY: THIS PHRASE

Burnout is now officially recognised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as an "occupational phenomenon." In ICD-11 it is defined as a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed, characterised by:

- **exhaustion or energy depletion,**
- **increased mental distance from one's job, cynicism, or negativity,**
- **reduced professional efficacy.**

This means burnout is not merely a feeling of being tired: it's a measurable syndrome that impacts many in their daily lives.

For younger generations, the numbers are harrowing:

- A global survey showed that 65 % of Gen Z reported at least one mental health problem in the past two years, compared with 51 % for Millennials, 29 % for Gen X, and 14 % for Boomers. The Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Nearly half of Gen Z suffer from office anxiety: 47 % experience strong anxiety before a workweek begins. The International
- Many report being stressed or anxious nearly all the time. For instance, Statista found that 2024 saw Gen Z in many countries reporting persistent stress or anxiety. Statista

WHY IT MATTERS—URGENCY & STAKES

In a world where connectivity is constant and the boundary between "work" and "home" is blurred, burnout is no longer an edge case—it is becoming mainstream.

- **Businesses lose productivity, creativity; turnover increases.**
- **Individuals suffer sleepless nights, anxiety disorders, emotional exhaustion.**
- **Social costs: healthcare burden increases; inequality surfaces—those with flexibility, privilege, support suffer less, those without are burned out dangerously fast.**

Moreover, the cultural expectations—"hustle hard," "be always on," "side-projects," social media curation—create invisible pressure. Gen Z and younger millennials feel guilty for not doing enough, even in rest. Rest is framed as indulgence.
Rest, in this context, ceases to be laziness. It becomes an act of resistance. A necessary rebellion. A declaration of: "I'm human. I need recovery. I deserve dignity."

CHALLENGES WE FACE

1. Cultural norms that valorize overwork. Talking about 80-hour weeks, hustle, and "always on" is admired. Taking rest is seen as falling behind.
2. Digital intrusion. Phones, always-on messaging, social media: work bleeds into rest.
3. Economic pressure. High cost of living, precarious contracts, gig work—many feel they can't afford to rest.

4. Stigma around mental health. Admitting burnout feels like admitting weakness.
5. Lack of institutional support. Many workplaces provide wellness initiatives, but few have policies that protect rest, enforce boundaries, or measure psychological safety.

HOW WE GET THERE: WHAT'S NEEDED

To make rest genuinely possible—not an ideal, but everyday practice—we need change at several levels:

- **Policy & regulation** that enforce limits: on overtime, accessibility after hours, expectations of constant availability.
- **Workplace culture shift**: leadership that models rest, values mental recovery, allows flexibility.
- Technology boundaries: set norms for email after hours, limit notifications, encourage "digital sabbaths."
- **Education & literacy:** teaching young people that rest is part of health, not sloth; integrating rest, sleep, recovery in health curricula.
- **Economic support:** fair wages, stable contracts, benefits for mental health care.

5 THINGS EVERYONE CAN DO TODAY

- **Set a rest boundary**. Choose one hour each evening to truly disconnect: no phone, no email.
- **Schedule rest like work**. Calendar a "rest appointment"—just like a meeting—so you don't cancel it last minute.
- **Practice micro-breaks.** Short pauses—stretching, breathing, walking outside—every 90 minutes of work.
- **Choose restorative hobbies.** Not "productive" leisure, but something for its own sake—reading, gardening, drawing.
- **Learn to say no.** To extra tasks, late emails, side hustle overload. Saying no gives space to breathe.

RETURNING TO ELENA

That Sunday evening finds Elena finally putting her phone on silent. She closes her laptop, sits by the window with a cup of tea. The world outside goes quiet and golden. She reads a poem she loves—not to publish it, just to feel. In that pause, she remembers why she began her work: to create, to contribute, to feel alive. She doesn't know yet all the changes ahead—but in that moment, rest becomes a declaration, a small rebellion.

A CALL TO ACTION

If you read this and something resonated in your chest, believe this: you are not alone. If rest has been whispered to you as indulgence, it's time to shout it as necessity. Support others when they rest. Ask workplaces to respect time off. Teach children that exhaustion isn't badge of honor. Speak up when your boundaries are crossed. And tonight, maybe you can gift yourself a moment: a candle, a book, silence. Let this be your rebellion—not in noise, but in peace.

Because rest is not laziness. It is leadership. It is survival. It is the seed from which a rebuilt, resilient life can grow.

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Rest Revolution