

BLUE ZONES

“Good health is not something we can buy. However, it can be an extremely valuable savings account.” – Anne Wilson Schaefer

How to use your 5 senses to find inner calm

Trina Justman Reichert
Special to Naples Daily News
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More than ever, it is important to your health to make time in each day to practice the Blue Zones Project Power Nine principle of downshifting: something that allows you to relax, safely release stress, and focus on the art of recharging.

Take a moment as you read this to stop, put both feet flat on the floor and take a deep breath from way down deep in your belly and slowly let it out. Roll your shoulders back. Observe what is happening around you.

Are you taking moments like this routinely throughout your day? Below are some suggestions on how to use your five senses to downshift throughout your day.

Flowers and plants: Studies have proven that indoor plants reduce stress levels and boost your mood. Add some in a high traffic area where they are also the first thing you see in the morning and last thing you see in the evening.

Aroma: Similarly, for some, the ability to relax and downshift is easier when they experience a pleasing smell. That may be a candle or diffusing essential oils. It may just be having a window open and smelling the freshness of the air. “Smell is the strongest of the senses and is best able to influence brain activity. Olfactory bulbs are part of the limbic system and directly connect to the areas of the brain that process emotion and learning.” Entrepreneur.com, October 2012.

Something pleasing to touch: For many, it is relaxing to pet an animal. If you don’t have that option, soft blankets or pillows may also be great sources of



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comfort to help you unwind.

Music to your ears: Some people like to play music or prefer the white noise of a fan. Even pausing to breathe along with the steady tick tock of a clock can create an intentional moment of downshifting in your home. You could even try wind chimes outside your window and because they’re not in constant motion, when you do hear them, try to stop and appreciate their song.

Tea time: Adopt an afternoon or evening ritual of sipping tea. “Chamomile has been shown to help with anxiety reduction due to its antioxidant content and anti-inflammatory effects,” Healthline.com says.

Another suggestion is a meditation

exercise that is pure delight. Put a small piece of dark chocolate in your mouth but don’t chew. Pay close attention to the texture and sensation and savor the taste as it begins to melt. See how long you can keep it there without biting it. It’s important to have fruits, vegetables, and whole grains on hand, but a small stash of dark chocolate for moments of relaxation and indulgence can also benefit your health.

Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida offers free Power 9 activities to help you downshift like Purpose Workshops, Yoga, Tai Chi, Friendship Moais and more. Go to BlueZonesProjectSWFL.Eventbrite.com to sign up.

You can also unwind at the end of the

day or ease into a restful night of sleep with meditation, streaming music and videos with Inspirations and Relax 360°. Visit bzpsouthwestflorida.sharecare.com

Blue Zones Project is part of Southwest Florida’s well-being improvement initiative that encourages changes in the community that lead to healthier options. For more information about Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida, visit southwestflorida.bluezonesproject.com.

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