

7 SCIENCE-SUPPORTED BRAIN BREAKS TO IMPROVE YOUR FOCUS

1 Play New, Diversified Brain Games

Why it works: While [scientists agree](#) that repetitive brain training may not actually improve functionality and focus, there's [research](#) which proves particular types of brain games are worth the investment. Some of these games even [enhance cognitive functioning](#) in older adults.

How to do it: The key is to diversify the games you play to challenge your mind to work in new ways. So you can try using logic and brain puzzle magazines, purchasing some new video games for your computer or console, or even swapping between different brain training apps on a regular basis.



2 Learn a Second Language

Why it works: Learning a 2nd (or 3rd, or 4th) language is reportedly one of the best ways of slowing the brain's aging process. The [University of Edinburgh discovered](#) learning a new language also improves cognitive abilities, general intelligence, and reading.

How to do it: Take just five to ten minutes of your break to go through a language-learning program; keeping at it consistently will get you the best results in the quickest amount of time. You can use software like [Rosetta Stone](#), premium programs like [Fluent in 3 Months](#), or apps like [Duolingo](#) to help you learn your language of choice while at home or on-the-go.

3 Take Up Juggling

Why it works: Juggling enhances connections in the brain to improve overall brain power and functioning. A [2009 study by Oxford University](#) found juggling specifically improved the brain's white matter, the nerve fibers that conduct electrical signals and connect various parts of the brain together.

How to do it: [Wikihow](#) has a thorough article for beginners on how to learn to juggle, while [Juggling.org](#) boasts a wide range of information on the skill. YouTube is also a prime learning source -- just search for "how to juggle."



4

Do Something Nice for Someone

Why it works: [Multiple studies](#) have shown doing something nice for someone else, volunteering, or performing an altruistic act can reduce stress and make you happier. Being nice is also proven to decrease depression, increase life expectancy, and make you more likely to enjoy your job.

How to do it: Think about a person in your life who needs something small but helpful done for them, and then do it. This could be a family member in the hospital who would appreciate a digital “get well” card, or even a co-worker who needs help moving to a new desk. Consider adding a to-do in your weekly calendar to do one small act of kindness.

5

Sit Back and Daydream

Why it works: Scientists used to think our brains were dormant when we daydreamed, but not anymore. [Various studies](#) have shown daydreaming increases brain activity, [improves creativity](#), and helps the brain make connections and reach insights an overly-worked mind can't.

How to do it: If you haven't daydreamed in a long time, it might take you a few breaks to get back into the practice. Just remember what it was like when you were a kid concocting your own stories or situations in your head, and let your mind extrapolate on that. You can also think of one of your favorite topics, movies, books, etc. and ask a question like “what if?” to see where your brain takes you.

6

Ditch Your Phone to Socialize

Why it works: A pair of [researchers at Ajou University](#) in South Korea recently discovered workers who spent their lunch breaks on their cell phones (instead of talking to friends and co-workers) said they felt they'd enjoyed the same amount of distraction from work, but actually ended up being more emotionally drained by the afternoon.

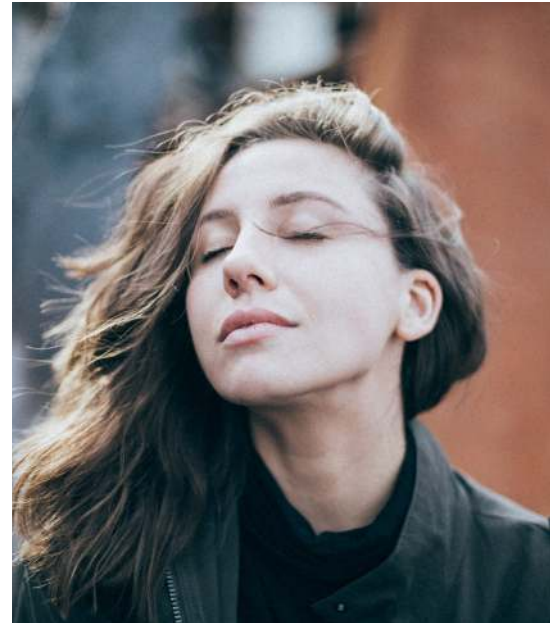
How to do it: Make it a goal to avoid your phone the next time you take a break so you can properly socialize with those around you. If you find this difficult, use an app like [Moment](#) to track how much time you spend on your phone each day and adjust your usage; you can also challenge yourself to ditch your phone with an app like [Put Your Phone Down](#), which helps you earn achievements the longer you spend off your phone.

7

Take Just Two Minutes to Clear Your Mind

Why it works: Sometimes doing brain-intensive tasks during your break may be counterproductive; [multiple studies](#) have shown relaxing breaks can increase our productivity.. Even clearing your mind for two minutes will help you de-stress, re-focus, and improve performance on your tasks throughout the rest of the day.

How to do it: Meditating is a time- and science-tested method of relaxing, the benefits of which are only enhanced if you can also do yoga along with it. However, if you don't want to use up your entire break performing these activities, try visiting donothingfor2minutes.com, which encourages you to relax, listen to the sound of crashing waves, and avoid touching your mouse or keyboard at risk of resetting the countdown timer.



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Nir founded two tech companies since 2003 and has taught at the Stanford Graduate School of Business and the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford. He is the author of the bestselling book, [Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products](#).