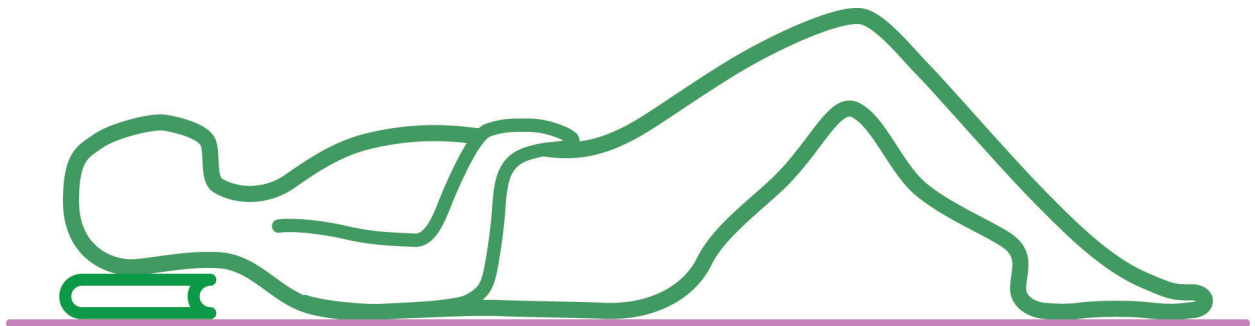


# Constructive Rest

*A Guide by Imogen Ragone*

experience for yourself the benefits of this  
simple yet powerful self-care practice



## **Illustrations**

Many thanks to Alexander Technique teacher Becca Ferguson ([www.MindfulAT.com](http://www.MindfulAT.com)) for allowing use of the following illustrations: Constructive Rest (pages 1 and 18); Seated Figure (page 9). These images are used with permission.

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# Introduction

***“Take rest; a field that has rested gives a bountiful crop.”***

***—Ovid***

Constructive Rest is more than relaxation!

It's is a simple, powerful practice to energize and restore body and mind.

- **Are you ready to make a commitment to improve your posture, release tension, and calm your nervous system?**
- **Are you ready to prioritize your own self-care and reap the benefits to be more *efficient, energetic* and *productive*?**

**Constructive Rest** is a highly effective way to do these things, and more! The practice was inspired by the Alexander Technique as a simple, yet powerful, self-help tool to help you release harmful tension. All you need are a few minutes of time, a couple of books, and a quiet place to lie down.

This guide, along with the accompanying audio, gives you everything you need to get started with this wonderful practice.

## **NOTE:**

Constructive Rest is not a replacement for medical care. Please see your doctor if you have any concerns.

## What is it, and why do it?

Simply stated, **Constructive Rest** is a way of lying down in a semi-supine position (on the back with knees elevated), that promotes good spinal alignment and release of excess tension. It is a common procedure used in Alexander Technique instruction, and is also known as active rest, semi-supine, the balanced resting state or simply an Alexander lie down.

Practicing Constructive Rest is one of the quickest and simplest ways to restore our natural shape, and is invaluable for anyone suffering from neck or back pain.

By taking the time to lie down in Constructive Rest you will:

- Allow muscles and joints to **release excess tension**.
- Take **pressure off the spine**, allowing displaced spinal fluid to be reabsorbed, easing compression and giving you back your full height.
- **Become calmer** as you take time away from the stresses of the day.
- Allow your **breathing** to become more regular.
- Help release abdominal tension so your **digestive system** can work better.
- Regain **energy and ease** for life in the upright
- Be more **productive and efficient** in the activities of your day.

## Getting Started



To make the most out of your Constructive Rest practice, lie down at least **once a day**. Find a time that works best for you and your schedule. For many people the optimal time is early afternoon, which gives you a chance to restore and energize yourself before the second half of the day begins.

If you are comfortable and have the time, **10-20 minutes** once, or even twice, a day will be most beneficial. (20 minutes is considered the optimal amount of time to allow your spine to regain its full height.) If, however, five minutes is all you can do, the benefits are still valuable. Five minutes every day will soon add up!

To get started, here's what you need to do:

- Find a quiet, warm, floor space where you can lie down undisturbed - somewhere carpeted or use a yoga mat, so you're on a firm but comfortable surface.

- Place a small pile of books under your head for support – this should be high enough to stop your head pulling back, but not so high that your chin is pushed toward your chest, constricting your throat.
- Bend your knees so they point up toward the ceiling, with your feet flat on the floor about shoulder-width apart.
- Let your hands rest on your abdomen, fingers released and elbows out to the side, allowing width in your upper body. Alternatively, if you have space, you can extend your whole arms out to the side, a little below shoulder level, palms lightly facing upward.
- Aim to be almost completely passive physically.
- During Constructive Rest be aware of the ground supporting your back, allowing your shoulders to rest as your back widens and your whole body lengthens and expands.
- Listen to the Audio Guide while you do it. It will help guide your thinking and awareness to maximize the benefits. The audio is just under 20 minutes long - the optimum amount of time to allow your spine to regain its full length.
- As you move back into your daily activities, notice your body's regained ease and expansion.

## Tips

- If your head feels uncomfortable on the book(s), make the top softer with a wad of tissues or a folded scarf.
- Let your eyes remain open, at least for some of your time lying down, so this can be a time for building greater awareness of your body and surroundings.
- If you start to feel drowsy, turn your toes inward and let your knees fall together so the legs don't flop.
- If your lower back is painful, it can be particularly helpful to support the lower legs on a low piece of furniture or rest the knees over a pillow. This way the legs can rest completely and allow the lower back to relax. (See the next section on *Alternative Positions* for more information.)
- If you are uncomfortable with your hands resting on your abdomen, you can either let them rest by your side, elbows slightly bent and palms down, or you can extend your arms out to the side almost level with your shoulders, palms facing upward.
- To get the most out of your Constructive Rest, especially in the beginning, listen to the accompanying Audio Guide as you do it.

## Alternative Positions

The traditional **Constructive Rest** position is not always viable for a variety of reasons. If you have back pain Constructive Rest can be one of the most helpful things you can do, but for some people the standard position, with knees bent and feet flat on the floor, can be uncomfortable or even painful. Others have difficulties getting up and down from the floor, or it may simply not be possible to lie down due to your location. Luckily there are some helpful variations that are great alternatives for people for whom the standard position doesn't work.\*

### Resting the Knees Over Something



It's important that the knees are elevated to help the back release. If that is difficult, uncomfortable or painful for you to do without support, the simple solution is to rest the legs over a bolster, pillows or cushions. This way they are fully supported, yet the knees are still elevated, easing pressure on the lower spine.



## Resting the Legs at Right Angles to the Torso

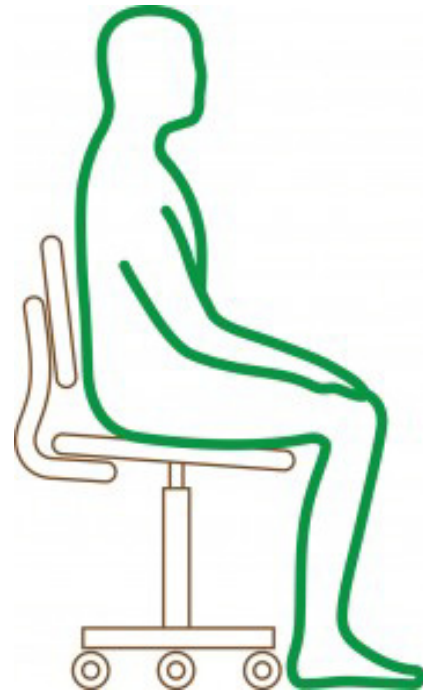


In this variation the lower legs rest on a low piece of furniture like a couch or ottoman, or even a chair, as in the image above. This really eases pressure on the lower back, and I've found that people with sciatica, low back pain or hip problems tend to find this position particularly helpful.

In both this, and the previous alternative, make sure your support is wide enough so you don't feel the need to hold your legs together. This way the legs and back can rest completely, allowing the lower back to relax.

## Constructive Sitting

Sometimes lying down is not an option because of mobility challenges, or simply because of your location. This does not mean, however, that you cannot practice Constructive Rest at all. The mindful thinking and awareness process of Constructive Rest can be applied in many other positions, including sitting, which is probably the easiest for most of us to do conveniently.



When sitting, be sure you are:

- Balanced on your sit bones
- Have your feet resting easily on the floor

If being upright without strain is difficult for you, do the following:

- Rest your back on the back of the chair, moving your whole self back as necessary so you remain on your sit bones.

\* NOTE: Constructive Rest is not a replacement for medical care. Please see your doctor if you have any concerns.

# 30 Days of Constructive Rest

## Take the Challenge!

**Can you make Constructive Rest a daily priority and practice?**

Prioritizing self care, along with forming a new habit, is a challenge for most of us. However, the way to reap the full benefit of Constructive Rest is to make it a daily practice.



### **The 30-Day Constructive Rest Challenge**

To help you create this new habit, I created the **30-Day Constructive Rest Challenge**. Joining the Challenge is open to everyone and is completely free of charge.

By signing up for the Challenge each day you will receive an **email reminder** from me to help you with your commitment to this wonderful practice.

In each email reminder you will also receive:

- A “**Thought for the Day**” – something for you to think about during your Constructive Rest and which you can come back to at any time during the rest of the day.
- An additional **free resource**. I have gathered these from many sources, including from Alexander Technique teachers around the world, and also include some of my own. One day you might receive a short audio you can listen to while you lie down, on another perhaps a video, article or podcast about Constructive Rest with useful tips and information to encourage you in your practice.

You can sign up for the Challenge at my website at:

<http://www.imogenragone.com/30-days-of-constructive-rest-2/>

Use your new Audio Guide as much as you want throughout the Challenge.

In addition, use the chart on the next page to track your progress.

## 30-Day Constructive Rest Challenge

### Track Your Progress!

|               |               |               |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>DAY 1</b>  | <b>DAY 2</b>  | <b>DAY 3</b>  | <b>DAY 4</b>  | <b>DAY 5</b>  |
|               |               |               |               |               |
| <b>DAY 6</b>  | <b>DAY 7</b>  | <b>DAY 8</b>  | <b>DAY 9</b>  | <b>DAY 10</b> |
|               |               |               |               |               |
| <b>DAY 11</b> | <b>DAY 12</b> | <b>DAY 13</b> | <b>DAY 14</b> | <b>DAY 15</b> |
|               |               |               |               |               |
| <b>DAY 16</b> | <b>DAY 17</b> | <b>DAY 18</b> | <b>DAY 19</b> | <b>DAY 20</b> |
|               |               |               |               |               |
| <b>DAY 21</b> | <b>DAY 22</b> | <b>DAY 23</b> | <b>DAY 24</b> | <b>DAY 25</b> |
|               |               |               |               |               |
| <b>DAY 26</b> | <b>DAY 27</b> | <b>DAY 28</b> | <b>DAY 29</b> | <b>DAY 30</b> |
|               |               |               |               |               |

## More Information

Over the past few years I have written extensively about many different aspects of Constructive Rest in my blog:

- **Self Care: The #1 Strategy for Preventing Overwhelm and Stress** (<http://www.imogenragone.com/self-care-the-1-strategy-for-preventing-overwhelm-and-stress/>)
- **Alexander Technique Constructive Rest as a Daily Practice** (<http://www.imogenragone.com/alexander-technique-constructive-rest-as-a-daily-practice/>)
- **It's Summer – the Perfect Time to Relax and Restore** (<http://www.imogenragone.com/its-summer-the-perfect-time-to-relax-and-restore/>)
- **Keep Calm with Constructive Rest!** (<http://www.imogenragone.com/keep-calm-with-constructive-rest/>)
- **The “Restorative Niche” and Constructive Rest** (<http://www.imogenragone.com/the-restorative-niche-and-constructive-rest/>)
- **Lying Down for Back Pain Relief** (<http://www.imogenragone.com/lying-down-for-back-pain-relief/>)
- **Stress Reliever: The Alexander Technique Practice of Lying Down** (<http://www.imogenragone.com/stress-reliever-the-alexander-technique-practice-of-lying-down/>)

## Praise for Constructive Rest

*I have found the constructive rest a great tool to deal with anxiety, tension and stress.*

—Roslyn Franklin, Australia (30-Day Constructive Rest Challenge)

*Alexander Technique Constructive Rest is a simple, yet powerful, way of releasing harmful tension which you can do almost anywhere. It also helps you re-calibrate your self-measurement of “zero” excess tension and is a wonderful platform to exploring such things as Alexander directions, simple activities like moving an arm or leg, breathing, speaking, singing – and much more. I do it regularly myself and I strongly recommend it to students.*

—Robert Rickover, Alexander Technique Teacher, USA

*I had been trying the constructive rest previously but hadn't managed to get into a routine again. Your emails gave me extra support and encouragement and I thank you for that.... General aches and pains, also lower discs fusing, stiffness of neck and pain in the hip on awakening in the morning, general wear and tear and misuse, all these have been greatly improved in the past 30 days.*

—Gordon, Scotland (30-Day Constructive Rest Challenge)

*Thank you for the 30-Day Challenge. I have scoliosis and have noticed I can stand and work a lot longer without pain now! I have known for a long time that I should do Constructive Rest, but just had trouble carving out the time to do it.*

—Karen, USA (30-Day Constructive Rest Challenge)

*Constructive Rest is a lifesaver for me, providing a way to stop and refresh, reset and calm myself during the day – like an “awake power nap”, only better. Constructive Rest is especially beneficial during times of extra stress or a deadline, helping me to clear my head and shed fatigue.*

*—Becca Ferguson, Alexander Technique Teacher, USA*

*I’ve been making Constructive Rest a part of my daily routine for a year or so now, but found the 30 day challenge really focused me on how I could get even more benefit from this time in semi-supine. Rather than lying on the floor and thinking about tasks I need to do during the day, what to have for lunch, etc, I feel I’m now more aware of my body, where there’s tension, where feels comfortable, and I feel the benefits more profoundly through the rest of the day. I found the daily thoughts very helpful – some stayed with me more than others, others dropped away faster. Maybe the ones that we really need to hear are the ones that resonate the most. Thank you, Imogen, for this wonderful resource!*

*—Catherine, UK (30-Day Constructive Rest Challenge)*

*Thank you so much, Imogen, for your program. I never realized how unconscious I was to my body mechanics. Your program has allowed me insight & much awareness into all aspects of bodily movement. My body and I thank you for bringing back to consciousness what was innately there all along but has long been forgotten over the years with slow but consistent bad habits.*

*—Marguerite, USA (30-Day Constructive Rest Challenge)*

Find more praise for Constructive Rest at:

[www.imogenragone.com/30-days-of-constructive-rest-2/](http://www.imogenragone.com/30-days-of-constructive-rest-2/)



## Imogen Ragone



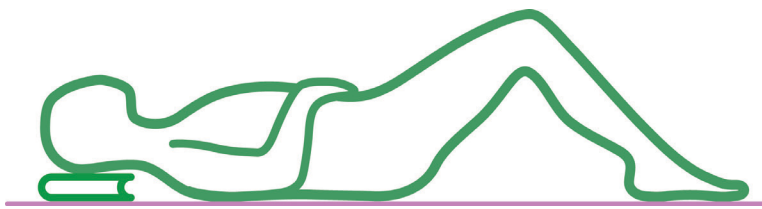
I am a nationally certified teacher of the Alexander Technique. Originally from the UK, I have lived in the US since 1991 and am now based in Wilmington, Delaware. I am the creator of the 30-Day Constructive Rest Challenge, which has helped people around the world benefit from this wonderful practice.

Learning the Alexander Technique turned my life around. After struggling with chronic neck tension and pain for years, I not only gained freedom from the pain, but also found increased energy, confidence and enjoyment of life. Constructive Rest formed an important part of this process, and I do it every day. As an entrepreneur I consider it a vital tool to help me be as efficient and productive as possible for myself and my business.

\*\*\*

I hope you come to enjoy the benefits of Constructive Rest as much as I do, and that my Audio Guide is a helpful addition to your practice. If you have any questions or feedback for me, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Imogen". The script is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.



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Your feedback is always welcome.