

FRICTION

INTERNAL

Make Rest a Leadership Practice

The Experiment: The Rest Audit and the Visible Act

Duration: 2 weeks

Time required: 15–20 minutes at the start, 5 minutes daily

Goal: This experiment runs in two phases. The first is an audit of how you are currently resting and whether it is working. The second is a leadership action: doing something visible with what you learn.

Phase One: The Rest Audit (Week 1)

Step One: Map Your Effort Profile

Begin by honestly characterizing the dominant demands of your typical workday. Write a sentence or two in response to each of the following:

- Is my work primarily sedentary or physically active?

- Is it loud and social or quiet and solitary?

- Is it mentally intensive—analysis, writing, decision-making—or more relational and emotional?

- Do I spend most of my time with many people or working independently?

This is your effort profile. It tells you what has been depleted by the time your workday ends.

Step Two: Audit Your Current Rest

For the next seven days, briefly note each evening how you spent your non-work time. Be specific and honest. Not what you intended—what you did.

Then ask: Does my rest contrast with my effort, or mirror it?

A leader who spends the day in back-to-back meetings and then spends the evening passively scrolling has not changed the channel—they have simply lowered the volume. A leader who works in sustained mental concentration all day and then goes for a long run has done something genuinely restorative. The question is not whether you rested. It is whether what you did matches what you depleted.

And if your life right now does not allow for elaborate restoration—if you are in a hard season, carrying more than usual—look smaller. A shower taken slowly. A cup of coffee held with intention. A ten-minute nap. Micro-rituals are not a consolation prize. They are sometimes the whole practice.

Step Three: Identify the Gap

By the end of the week, write one sentence naming what you find:

- I deplete mostly by...

- I am restoring mostly by...

Phase Two: The Visible Act (Week 2)

This phase has one requirement: Make one change to your rest practice and do it visibly—meaning at least one person who works with or for you knows you are doing it.

This does not require an announcement. It might be as simple as blocking your calendar for a lunchtime walk and leaving the block visible to your team. Delegating a meeting you would normally absorb. Mentioning, briefly and without performance, what you did to restore yourself and why. The act of visibility is the leadership practice. It communicates that recovery is not something to hide or apologize for. It is something to design.

At the end of the two weeks, reflect on the following:

- What did I notice about my own energy and presence when my rest better matched my effort? What, if anything, shifted in how the people around me talked about or related to their own recovery?

