
A FREE GUIDE BY BRITTNEY COLLINS-JEFFERSON, LCSW

10

Signs You're Running on Empty

And What to Do About Each One

Most of us were never taught to recognize the signs of real exhaustion. Not the kind that sleep fixes, but the kind that lives quietly in the mind, body, soul, and spirit. This guide will help you identify what you have been carrying, understand why it feels this way, and take one honest step toward coming back to yourself.

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Rest is not a reward. It is your birthright.

MIND REST

01 Your thoughts will not stop, even when your body is still.

This is what a brain looks like when it has learned that staying alert means staying safe. Even when the threat is long gone, it keeps scanning. Racing thoughts are not a personal flaw or a sign that something is wrong with you. They are a protection response. Your mind is not misbehaving. It is trying to take care of you the only way it knows how.

WHAT TO DO

When your thoughts start racing, slow your exhale down to about six counts. Long, slow breaths are one of the most effective ways to tell your nervous system the danger has passed. You can also try saying quietly to yourself, "I hear you. We are okay." It sounds simple. Try it anyway.

02 You are always ten steps ahead, preparing for things that have not happened yet.

Rehearsing conversations. Planning for every possible outcome. Bracing for impact before anything has gone wrong. If this sounds familiar, your nervous system learned at some point that anticipating problems kept things from falling apart. That strategy made sense once. Now it just keeps you exhausted and living in a future that has not arrived.

WHAT TO DO

Before you respond to anything today, take one breath first. Not a dramatic, deep cleansing breath. Just one normal breath. That small pause is practice. It tells your body there is time, and that you do not need to have the answer right now.

BODY REST

03 Your body keeps sending signals you have been overriding.

Tight jaw. Shoulders raised near your ears. Headaches that arrive on a schedule. Fatigue that sleep does not seem to touch. Your body is not broken. It is communicating. Every ache, every knot, every bit of heaviness has something to say. Most of us were simply taught to push through rather than listen.

WHAT TO DO

Find one spot in your body right now that is holding tension. Place your hand there. Breathe into it for 30 seconds. You do not have to fix anything. You just have to let your body know that you noticed. That acknowledgment alone is a form of rest.

04 You are exhausted, but slowing down feels impossible.

When your nervous system has been in survival mode for a long time, rest stops feeling safe. Sitting still feels irresponsible. Doing nothing feels like failing. That is not laziness. That is a body that has been conditioned to believe it must earn its rest. The guilt you feel when you stop is not the truth. It is a learned response, and it can be unlearned.

WHAT TO DO

Start with something small. A short walk with no destination. Eating a meal without your phone. Sitting outside without an agenda. You are not trying to overhaul everything at once. You are simply showing your nervous system that slowing down is survivable.

SOUL REST

05 You have lost interest in things that used to bring you joy.

Not sad, exactly. Just flat. The things that used to excite you now feel like one more obligation on a long list. That is not a personality shift. That is what happens when a person gives everything out and puts nothing back in for long enough. Your joy is not gone. It is buried under a lot of "not right now."

WHAT TO DO

Think of one thing you did purely for fun before life got heavy. Drawing, cooking, writing, singing in the car, being outside. Give yourself ten minutes this week to return to it. Not to be good at it, and not to produce anything from it. Just to remember what it feels like to do something that belongs only to you.

06 You feel numb, flat, or like you are just going through the motions.

Numbness is not emptiness. It is protection. When a person has felt too much for too long without enough room to process it, the system pulls back. You are not broken. You are overwhelmed. Underneath the flatness, there is usually a great deal of feeling that has not had anywhere safe to land.

WHAT TO DO

Instead of asking how to feel better, try asking what you are actually feeling right now. Name it, even if the name is vague. Heavy. Tired. Sad. You do not need to analyze it or solve it. Just let it exist for one minute without judgment. That is where soul rest begins.

You are pouring into everyone around you and running on fumes.

You show up for everyone. You answer the calls, hold the space, remember the details, and do the work. And somewhere in all of that, you disappeared. Giving without replenishing is not a virtue. It is a direct path to resentment, burnout, or both. You cannot keep giving from a cup that never gets refilled.

WHAT TO DO

Practice receiving something this week. Let someone help you. Accept a compliment without deflecting. Say yes to an offer of support without calculating what you owe in return. Letting yourself be cared for teaches your nervous system that you do not have to carry everything alone.

SPIRIT REST

08 The places and people that used to energize you now leave you drained.

When your spirit is running low, environments that once felt good start to feel heavy. Even people you love can feel like too much. This is not ingratitude. This is what misalignment feels like from the inside. Something in your life has shifted, and your spirit is trying to communicate that before your mind has even caught up.

WHAT TO DO

Spend five minutes somewhere that feels true to you. Outside in nature, in a quiet room, in music, in prayer. Go wherever you have historically felt most like yourself. You do not need a plan or a reason. Just let yourself remember what alignment feels like in your body.

09 Something feels off, and you cannot quite name it.

Your gut knows before your mind does. That unsettled feeling, the one without a clear reason attached to it, is your inner compass doing exactly what it was designed to do. Many people override it for years. They label it anxiety, overthinking, or sensitivity. It is usually none of those things. It is wisdom, asking to be heard.

WHAT TO DO

Ask yourself one honest question. "Where in my life am I pretending things are fine?" You do not have to answer out loud, and you do not have to act on anything today. Just let yourself see it clearly. Seeing it honestly is the beginning of everything.

10 Resting makes you feel guilty, like you should always be doing more.

If being still brings up shame, your sense of worth has been tied to your productivity for a long time. You are not lazy. You are someone who learned that doing more meant being more. Rest began to feel like a risk. Like if you stop, something will fall apart, or someone will think less of you. That is not the truth. That is exhaustion talking, and it is time to stop letting it have the final word.

WHAT TO DO

The next time you sit down to rest and guilt shows up, try saying this out loud. "I am allowed to stop. My value is not my output." You may not believe it the first time you say it. Say it anyway. You are practicing a new truth, and new truths take repetition before they stick.

YOU MADE IT THIS FAR. THAT MATTERS.

You Are Not Meant to Live Exhausted.

"When you commit to resting the mind, the body, the soul, and the spirit, you do not just slow down. You come home to yourself."

Reading this list took honesty. Recognizing yourself in these signs took courage. You are not broken, and you are not behind. You are someone who has been carrying a great deal for a long time without enough permission to set any of it down. That can change. It starts the moment you decide it does.

I choose rest.

I choose peace.

I choose alignment.

I choose myself.

I am worthy of the softness I offer others.

CONTINUE THE JOURNEY

I Quit Everything But God: Love Letters to the Restless

If this guide stirred something in you, this book was written for exactly this moment. It is a collection of letters written to the parts of me that were exhausted, restless, and trying too hard. It is an invitation to release the pressure to be everything for everyone, and find your way back to the truth that has always lived inside of you. Available now at

www.brittneycollins.com

Want to know which pillar of rest you need most? **Take the free quiz** at www.brittneycollins.com to get your personalized path back to peace.