

# Making Good Use of Down Time

As a creative freelance, unless you are incredibly lucky or organised, there are going to be occasional periods of down time. Sometimes these are welcome respites after a particularly hectic spell. However, on occasion, they can drag on too long, so it's important to make the most of this time.

Here are suggestions on how to do this.

## Recharge and refresh

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Down time is a perfect opportunity for you to do a little self-maintenance. Of course you should be looking after yourself while you are working, but there are some activities that get pushed out when time is short. A break in your schedule is the perfect time to try new health regimes from more sleep to a new sport so that you get fit and energetic for when you're back in action.

## Learn to do nothing well

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Maybe you haven't stopped for a while and need a complete break. If this is the case, you might like to get some information on mindfulness and try your hand at meditation. The basic principle of mindfulness is learning to be fully in the moment. That means not worrying about the past or future, just being aware of what is happening right now. There is an increasing body of scientific evidence that demonstrates the amazing physical and mental benefits this brings. Also, if you learn this skill when you have time, you can continue to practise it to stay more refreshed and balanced when you're pushed for time.

## Re-connect with people

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When busy friends and family can slide down the priority list. Use some of your free time to catch up with the people who are important to you. They are probably the foundation of your support network after all – and a good support network is particularly important for freelance work.



## Take time to reflect on progress

The problem with being busy is we often forget to schedule in thinking time. Without the space to think, we can carry on down a path that's not working for us, purely because we haven't taken the time to consider where we are and where we really want to go!

When you have some time, use it to look at your goals and plans from six months or a year ago, and see how much progress you have made. If all is going to plan, that's great. If not, that's also great, because now you realise that you can do something about it. Work out whether it's the goals that need to be amended, or the strategies you are using to get there.

## Have a down time 'to do' list

We should all keep a list of jobs we will do when we have the time. You know – those items that are constantly at the back of our minds but we never get around to doing. Put them all on a list, then, when you do actually have some time, there's no excuse, you just need to look your list out, and get on with it.

## Reconnect to what inspired you

Down time is the perfect opportunity to get back in touch with the activities that inspired you to get into this industry in the first place. Whether it's going to the theatre or a gig or less expensive activities like joining a group of like-minded people to discuss the things you love, it's important to remain connected so that you're motivated to find your next piece of work.

## Start new projects

Find something that interests you, and take some steps in a new direction. It doesn't have to be anything particularly related to work, as long as you enjoy it. It's amazing how opportunities can spring up when we are engaged in activities we enjoy.

## Network

Attend workshops, training or industry social events. It's important to use your free time to meet people and keep your finger on the pulse of what's happening, what's out there, and who's looking for people. Generally, work won't come to you, and the more you are out there, the more likely people will remember you, and have you in mind if they have a suitable project.



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## Make some calls

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Now is the time to get in touch with all those people you haven't had time to stay in touch with, e.g., if you have an agent, and are aware of projects or work that would suit you, get in touch for a chat, and make sure they know you are interested.

## Have fun

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Don't forget the F word! It is so important to have some FUN when you are 'enjoying' a career gap. Down time is part of the freelance experience, so embrace it.

## Create gaps

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Down time is so useful, that if you haven't got any breaks scheduled, it's advisable to plan some. People generally make their biggest life decisions when on holiday. This is because once away from work, they have the space and capacity to think about all the aspects of their life, not just their working day and current challenges.



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