

Coffee Break? Walk In The Park? Why Unwinding Is Hard

September 20, 2011

Wall Street Journal Asia:

A college student deep into studying for a big exam might do well to give his brain a break.

Just what he does during that break will determine how helpful that pause will be, a growing body of research shows. A stroll in the park could do wonders, for instance, while downing coffee could leave him just as stressed and depleted as before the break. And, sometimes, forcing oneself to simply power through mental fatigue can be more effective than pausing.

Like a muscle, our brains appear to get fatigued after working for sustained periods of time, particularly if we have to concentrate intensely or deal with a repetitive task, says Michael Posner, an emeritus professor at the University of Oregon who studies attention.

Researchers are zeroing in on some of the circumstances that bring about optimal mental refreshment.

Read the whole story: [Wall Street Journal Asia](#)