

# Drawing on Disabled Knowledge & Wisdom to Make Space for Rest

Level: Beginner  
Intensity Level: Low



Image description:  
Graphic of a person of color in a wheelchair, with a blanket over their lap. They are wearing a face mask and are resting their face on their hand. Their eyes are closed to indicate that they are resting.

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## About Me: Highlights

I am a licensed marriage and family therapist in Oakland, CA. I work primarily with BIPOC queer and trans adults and adolescents (age 13 and up) in private practice. About a third of my clients identify as autistic or neurodiverse.

I grew up in the Bay Area. I identify as mixed Chinese and White. I have a Chinese immigrant mother, and Italian American father. I identify as queer, transgender and non-binary. I have a relatively new disability and am neuroqueer. Like all of us, there are spaces in which I experience privilege and spaces in which I experience oppression. My intersections give me perspective in joining with my clients.

My practice is rooted in restoration, accountability, and healing justice.

# Reminder

This presentation draws from the following sources and my own lived experiences.

Hersey, T. (2022). Rest Is Resistance. Little, Brown Spark.

Kafai, S. (2021). Crip Kinship: The Disability Justice & Art Activism of Sins Invalid. Arsenal Pulp Press.

Padamsee, Y. M. (2011, June 19). Communities of Care, Organizations for Liberation. Naya Maya.

<https://nayamaya.wordpress.com/2011/06/19/communities-of-care-organizations-for-liberation/>

Piepzna-Samarasinha, L. L. (2018). Care work : Dreaming Disability Justice. Arsenal Pulp Press.

Sharman, Z. (2021). The Care We Dream Of: Liberatory & Transformative Approaches to LGBTQ+ Health. Arsenal Pulp Press.

# Offering

Text reads:

BELOVED: A MEDITATION  
soi/ seed/ water/ fruit  
Inside of you there is a wild garden growing sweet  
fruit of the seed buried deep and still Blooming;  
strength of vines longer and stronger than any trial or  
sacrifice you are a wonder You are the gift do you  
remember the last time you heard magic whispered in  
your own name Will you kneel at your own altar lay  
flowers at your own feet? Beloved

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Zena Sharman, "The Care We Dream Of: Liberatory and  
Transformative Approaches to LGBTQ+ Health"

I need to rest,  
I'm so tired,  
My body hurts,  
but...

I don't have the time.

I have to work.

I'll rest later.

My parents never rested, how could I?

I don't know how to rest.

I should be able to push through.

"Not doing anything" sounds lazy.

Rest is seen as  
inconvenient  
to capitalism

“ Capitalism says that disabled, tired bodies that spend too much time in bed are useless. Anyone who cannot create wealth for owners is useless. People are valued only for the wealth they labor to build for capitalism; **crips are useless to capitalism.**

Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha,  
"Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice"

## Resisting capitalism is part of disabled wellness & survival



Queer and trans disabled folks of color have always had to navigate oppressive systems of capitalism, white supremacy, and ableism (all connected).

There is a long history of pushing back, and advocating for **increased access** and recognition that **disability is not an inconvenience, not something to be cured, and not a burden.**

Image description:

Graphic of two people of color with their right fists raised. They both have angry facial expressions.

# What is rest?

Image description:

Graphic of person lying on their back with one hand resting behind their head. They have their eyes closed and look peaceful.



A protected **bed** / sleeping and napping space

Space to **dream** up worlds without capitalism and grind culture

**Resistance** to white supremacy, ableism, and capitalism

Resistance to the **colonization of our bodyminds**, and space to **grieve** the idea that our worth is connected to productivity, rather than believing that our worth is inherent as divine beings

"We must be intentional about **reimagining** what we believe rest is and can be for our lives"

(Tricia Hersey, "Rest Is Resistance: A Manifesto")

# What is rest?

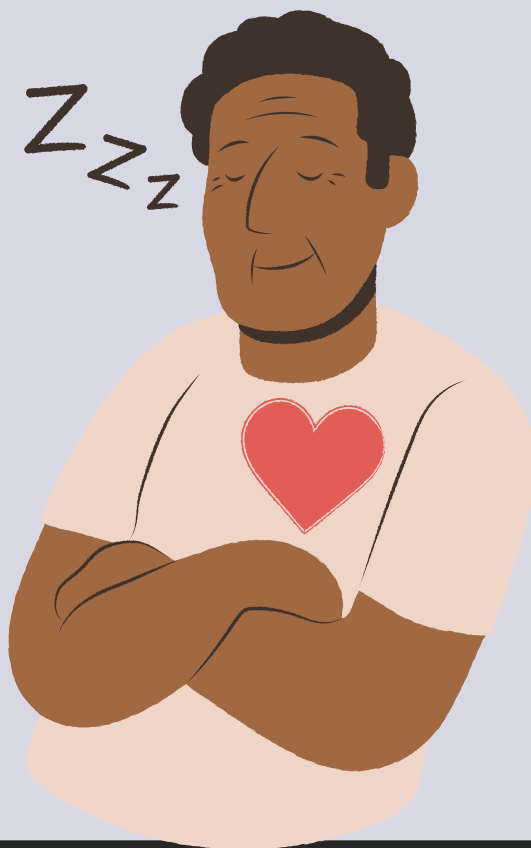


Image description:  
Graphic of a person of color with their arms crossed and their eyes closed. There is a "zzz" next to their mouth to indicate that they are resting.

“ Rest is a part of the cycles that happen inside of us as living organisms. That is **part of the cycle of restoration**, also of expression, and we must operate in those cycles. And when we don't – and when we insist that the body must always perform; that the body must always produce – it's that logic that shaves time off of our lives. It's important just on a biological level to understand **rest is a part of what it means to be alive.**

Prentis Hemphill

# Self vs. Collective care



Image description:

Graphic of a young person of color crouches next to an elder person of color who is in a wheelchair. They are holding hands and looking at each other

“ Too often self-care in our organizational cultures gets translated to our individual responsibility to leave work early, go home--alone--and go take a bath, go to the gym, eat some food and go to sleep. **So we do all of that 'self-care' to return to organizational cultures where we reproduce the systems we are trying to break.** Self-care, as it is framed now, leaves us in danger of being isolated in our struggle and our healing. Isolation of yet another person, another injustice, is a notch in the belt of Oppression. A liberatory care practice is one in which we move beyond self-care into caring for each other.

Yashna Maya Padamsee, "Communities of Care, Organizations for Liberation"

## Rest & privilege



Image description:

Graphic of a young person of color has their head pressed against an older person of color. They are leaning into each other and holding hands. They both have their eyes closed and are smiling.

“ What did our ancestors want for us? What did they want us to feel in this moment with all the sacrifices and surviving they did to give us some ease? We are their benefactors, and maybe our debt to them is to feel a little bit more free, and maybe that is rest.

**Gabrielle Zhuang-Estrin, LCSW**



Image description:

Graphic of a person of color is lying down on their side in a resting position. They are using their arm as a pillow. They have a smile on their face.

“ The joy of this body comes from crip community and interdependence, but most of all, of **the hard beauty of this life, built around all the time I must spend resting.** The bed is the nepantla of place of opening.

Nepantla: in-between-ness

Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, "Care Work:  
Dreaming Disability Justice"

# What does your rest look like?

Image description:

Graphic of a person of color wearing a mask and daydreaming out an open window. A happy dog is perched next to the person and is also looking out the window.



What does rest mean to you?

How do you **arrive** at rest?

What are your assumptions/judgments/expectations about needing rest, or about others needing rest?

How will you protect your resting space?

How will you make space for others to rest?

# Summary



Capitalism does not value disabled bodies, which leads disabled folks to create our own communities of care outside of a productivity mindset.

We need to make space for slowness, rest, and sustainability, all while being in community.

Rest is about sleep, easefulness, and resisting capitalist systems. This benefits both abled and disabled folks.

Disabled knowledge is sacred and genius!

Image description:

Graphic of a caregiver of color holding a child of color in their arms. The child is kissing the caregiver on their cheek. The caregiver has their eyes closed and looks happy.

## Sources / Gratitude for queer disabled knowledge



Hersey, T. (2022). Rest Is Resistance. Little, Brown Spark.

Kafai, S. (2021). Crip Kinship: The Disability Justice & Art Activism of Sins Invalid. Arsenal Pulp Press.

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Image description:

Graphic of three young people with varying disabilities. Two of them are people of color, one has light skin. All of them wear capes and are smiling.

Image description:  
Graphic of four  
people of different  
races lean together  
and hold each other



# Thank you for receiving

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Image description:  
Graphic of two people  
standing and hugging.

