

## RECHARGE Instant Recess Toolkit

### What is Instant Recess?

**RECHARGE Instant Recess** is a relaxing, short (5 to 10 minutes), and organized break built into the workday. It can be done anywhere, at any time, and is a great way to slow down and destress.

### Background:

According to the American Psychology Association, allowing yourself to step away, RECHARGE, and truly relax has a major effect on lowering stress. Breaks are the best way to prevent work burnout.

- ✓ 65% of City employees say they want to cope better with stress.
- ✓ Money, work and family responsibilities are the top 3 stressors for adults in the United States.

A growing body of evidence shows that taking regular breaks from mental tasks promotes physical and mental relaxation—and that skipping breaks can lead to stress and exhaustion.

This relaxation response brings your system back into balance by reducing stress, slowing down heart rate and blood pressure, relaxing your muscles, and increasing energy and productivity.

### How to start RECHARGE Instant Recess

Find the right space and time for employees to move and relax. Then, use the script provided to lead a breathing or movement break from the RECHARGE activities list. Remember: the most important component of RECHARGE Instant Recess is incorporating mindful breaks in the workday.

## Instructions

### Consider Logistics:

- **Ask for leadership support:** RECHARGE Instant Recess should be introduced to the workplace as an ongoing resource. Start off with a 6 week pilot to see how participation is. When identifying the space, time and day of RECHARGE Instant Recess—consider allowing Department Leaders to weigh in and ask them to support the activity by encouraging staff to participate and by participating themselves.
- **Choose the right space.** Find a space where staff can safely gather once a week for RECHARGE Instant Recess. Consider break areas, conference rooms, clearings between cubicles, hallways, or going outside for fresh air. The space doesn't have to be large, just large enough for everyone to safely move. Make sure the location you choose for RECHARGE Instant Recess is close in proximity to employees. The farther they have to go, the more likely they may opt out.
- **Schedule RECHARGE Instant Recess:**
  - **Choose a day of the week** that works where most employees are at the workplace. Keep in mind alternative work schedules and heavy meeting/offsite days.
  - **Choose a time of day.** It is difficult to find a time that works for all, so aim for a time that works for most. Consider making it in the morning to start the day off on a good note or in the afternoon to release tension.
- **Who is leading the activity?** It's ideal to have a dedicated person to help lead the activity. If you can't lead the activity, then ask a colleague to lead it. Make sure to schedule it into your day to avoid having other obligations or conflict. You can also consider rotating leaders for each week. Use this [sign-up sheet](#) to help schedule leaders and diversify the activities throughout the weeks.

## Advertise & Promote:

- Send an email using this [promotional email template](#) to promote RECHARGE Instant Recess.
- [Post flyers](#) in the break area or locations that are highly visible to employees.

## Start RECHARGE Instant Recess!

- **Select Activities that work for your Employees.** Use the [RECHARGE IR Activities deck](#). If employees are on their desks most of the time, then pick seated neck, back and shoulder stretches. If they stand a lot, then pick ankle and leg stretches.
- **Before Recess: Practice.** Make sure that the leader practices the activities beforehand to ensure proper posture and help participants if they need assistance. It's important that the person leading the activity feels comfortable with the activity and providing instruction and guidance for other participants.
- **Start the Activity.** Here is a [guide](#) to help lead activities effectively. It is important to go over safety instructions. Make sure that the leader does not go over the specified time and provide exercise variations depending on the flexibility level of participants.
- **After Recess: Reflect.** What worked and what did not? Were the activities too difficult, or too easy? Did you go over the specified time? Adjust teaching style and activities accordingly.

## Tips to Encourage Participation

- **Send a [reminder email](#).** Send an email with location and time the morning of the activity. Some employees may need a reminder email to show up.
- **[Distribute desk signs](#)** to employees participating in Instant Recess to encourage others to join in.
- **Music.** Having music sets the mood for relaxation and encourages people to keep coming to these sessions. Consider some calming songs from this [RECHARGE playlist](#). Small speakers or even your phone will do the trick.
- **Get employees involved.** Let employees pick activities of the day, consider a rotation of employees who will lead the activity, or let participants choose the songs to play during the break.
- **Increase RECHARGE IR breaks.** Offer additional breaks when the room gets too crowded. Adding another session during the week ensures that people have space to move freely, which makes them more motivated to attend these sessions. Increasing the frequency also accounts for people who were unable to participate due to schedule conflicts.