

MAKE TIME FOR **YOU**

Don't fritter away your precious free time. Plan to spend it well.



WHEN WORK SCHEDULES, FAMILY OBLIGATIONS, DOCTOR APPOINTMENTS AND OTHER HASSLES LEAVE YOU FRAZZLED, making plans for your free time might be the last thing you want to do. But scheduling leisure activities that appeal to you could really give you a lift.

According to a Taiwanese study published in 2010 in the *Journal of Happiness Studies*, spending free time in ways that

are important to you or make you happy rather than in ways that merely relieve boredom can improve your quality of life. Researchers found that the amount of free time didn't matter as much as how the time was spent.

Instead of mindlessly flipping through channels, give some of these activities a try next time you have a few free minutes – or hours. —CHRISTINE BROPHY

If you have...

Then You Can ...

15
minutes

Meditate. The simplest way is to sit in a comfortable position, breathe deeply and concentrate on one thing, such as your breathing or a comforting image. Studies show meditation can ease emotional stress and physical symptoms of arthritis and related conditions.

30
minutes

Take a stroll or bike ride around the neighborhood. Being outside, especially in a green setting, helps boost your mood and energy and reduce tension, according to an analysis published in the journal *Environmental Science and Technology*.

1
hour

Try a new, healthful recipe (for ideas, see page 26). Or do some gardening: A study in *Arthritis Research & Therapy* found that activities like gardening can ease fibromyalgia symptoms, and *HortScience* published a study that found gardening makes people feel tranquil and optimistic.

2
hours

Treat yourself to a manicure, pedicure or haircut. When people feel confident about their appearance, they tend to do better in their relationships, work and other areas, according to the American Academy of Dermatology.

3+
hours

Ask a friend to join you in a favorite activity, such as shopping or having lunch. Numerous studies have found that social activities and connections improve mood, prevent depression and help keep your mind sharp.