

App Is an Excellent Relaxation Tool

REVIEWED BY ROBIN BRADLEY HANSEL, PT, CPI

Despite having a PT's professional knowledge of guided meditation, I confess that I personally find it difficult to put these concepts into successful practice during times of intense emotional stress. The challenge of educating therapy clients in the importance of adding relaxation practice to their traditional rehab programs can prove equally daunting. The Relax & Rest Guided Meditations app by Meditation Oasis is an effective tool for calming the mind and body any time of the day as well as during occasional periods of nighttime insomnia.

Affordably priced at \$0.99, Relax & Rest offers three unique meditations for iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch, Windows and Android devices. Richard and Mary Maddux bring more than 30 years of healing arts practice, counseling, and teaching to their complete line of Meditation Oasis apps. Mary provides the softly voiced narration while Richard's original musical compositions lend gentle background enhancements as desired.

Relax & Rest offers options for 5-, 13- or 24-minute blocks of guided voice meditations. After selecting the desired duration, you may choose the accompaniment of gentle background music, nature sounds or nothing at all. Three choices of nature sounds – ocean, rain or stream – are available.

I appreciated the ability to decide if I wanted the nature sounds or music to continue after the guided vocal narration ceased. This feature was particularly helpful at nighttime to enhance sustained sleep. Six options for extended play ranging from 5 to 120 minutes are available.

Another nice feature for auditory-challenged users is the ability to independently control the volume of the voice narration separately from the background music or nature sounds. Pause and restart buttons are available should the meditation session get interrupted. I did find myself wishing for the ability to also rewind or fast-forward during the meditation, since there were several times I wanted to replay specific parts of the prompts but could not do so.

All three meditation options begin with a focus on relaxed breathing and posture. The 5-minute meditation primarily emphasizes breath awareness. It can be used anytime of the day for a quick break and chance to refocus one's attention. The 13-minute version progresses from focused breathing to an awareness of generalized muscle tension and concludes with gentle prompts aimed at stress awareness and management. The whole-body meditation takes the user through nearly all the muscular and spinal areas of the body. It lasts 24 minutes and is best saved for the end of the day to enhance



and sustain a restful, deep sleep.

Gentle prompts stay with the listener long after the meditation has concluded, such as "Relaxation isn't something you can do. It's about letting go of doing. Letting go of effort." Throughout the experience, the listener is encouraged to be in the present moment in order to reconnect with the physical body. "Be as effortless as the breath," the user is reminded.

Screen colors are set to soothing blues, greens and lavenders, so as to not be visually disturbing during nighttime use. An information icon in the top right of the menu provides direct access to the application's website and social media platforms for additional customer support. Creator Mary Maddux responded to my inquiry, stating they'll be issuing an update this year that optimizes the app for use with iOS 7. Beyond that, no other substantive changes in the app's content or structure are planned at this time.

As a PT (and high-strung individual), I definitely recommend the Relax & Rest Guided Meditations app as an excellent relaxation tool for practitioners, patients and caregivers. It's also a safe and effective sleep-enhancement option for anyone struggling with occasional insomnia or nighttime wakefulness. ■

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Relax & Rest Guided Meditations by Meditation Oasis

Rating of Function for Physical Therapy Professionals	Number of Stars Out of 5
Ease of Use	★★★★★
Relevance to PT	★★★★
Frequency of Projected Use	★★★★★
Potential for Upgrade with Improvements	★★★★
Usefulness for Therapeutic Intervention	★★★★★
Accuracy	★★★★★

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