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Introduction

OOS (occupational overuse syndrome) previously known as RSI (repetitive strain injury) is an injury that is becoming more and more common in today's computer intensive world. OOS/RSI can be very painful and debilitating if not treated early. With this in mind, the best cure is prevention, though if the injury already exists, it requires strict work methods to allow recovery.

Therefore the primary purpose of this program is to prevent/heal injury by reminding the user to take breaks from their computer at intervals which suit their particular needs.

Use of any tool similar to this one requires that the user sets it up correctly for their own needs, uses it correctly and takes breaks as and when intended.

As people and circumstances differ, use of this program does not guarantee prevention or recovery from OOS/RSI. It is intended as assistance only.

It is highly recommended that you take All Micropauses and Rest Breaks. To not do so greatly increases the possibility of injury.

This program uses techniques to monitor and interrupt user input. Although thoroughly tested, we cannot accept any responsibility for any consequence of using this program.

Operation of this program (how it works)

All settings (except sounds) are managed in the Settings screen (via the Tools menu).

Micropauses are taken after preset intervals (settings). After the set number of micropauses, there is a Rest Break which lasts for the set number of minutes. Then the cycle starts over again.

If you do not do any computer work from one micropause to when the next micropause is due (working time), the count of micropauses is not increased.

If you do not do any computer work for any particular 10 second period during working time, you will get an extra 10 seconds before the next pause (ie recover that period).

If you are not working on the computer for a length of time exceeding the Rest Break, the next Rest Break will be cancelled (assumed taken early) and you will go back to the first micropause when next used.

The first 10 seconds of every break will allow you to continue working. After that, stop working will be enforced (if enabled) by keeping the mouse pointer inside the micropause window, although these can be ignored if your settings allow it.

If you continue input during a Rest Break or Micropause, the time for that Break/Pause will be increased until the input stops.

While this program is running, it sits as an icon in the system tray (by the clock). Right mouse clicking on this icon gives access to most needed menus. Double clicking the icon toggles the monitoring (On and Off). Hovering the mouse over the tray icon gives a 'pop-up' message of the current status of Break Reminder.

Settings

All settings are managed in the Settings screen (via the Tools menu).

Micropauses are measured in seconds and are the length of time that you take regular and frequent pauses.

Rest Breaks are measured in minutes and are the time for occasional breaks right away from your computer.

Work Time is in minutes, and is the time between Micropauses.

The number of pauses between breaks is the number of Micropauses that will occur before a Rest break is required.

There are three preset Setting buttons provided which, depending on your situation, should be the starting place, then customised after that.

The ability to ignore Micropauses and Rest Breaks is an option, although if set to allow ignoring, you should try not to use this, unless what you are doing is desperately important.

NOTE: If different users log onto the computer, their individual Break Reminder settings and options will be retained.

Minimum Safety, Normal Safety, and Maximum Safety

Options

All options are managed in the Options screen (via the Tools menu).

Starting in tray starts the program already running and in the tray so you don't have to click the start button.

Auto-Run at start-up makes the program start each time your computer is started. This is a good idea so that it is always running, and you don't have to remember to start it.

Enforce Pauses and Breaks means that it puts the mouse pointer inside the notice after 10 seconds. This is desirable for maximum safety (nuisance value) but may not be preferred if you are using graphics intensive programs where you do not want to have your mouse movements interrupted.

Tick the option "Disable input monitoring" if you want the Exact Work Time that you have selected to be used. ie You do not want it to be extended if there is reduced user input during work time. (The Micropauses and Rest Break times are not affected and will still increase if there is user input during them.

The Pre-Break warning sound is to let you know that a Micropause or Rest Break is coming in 10 seconds. What it actually does is extend the Work Time by that 10 seconds after Pre-Break warning sound.

NOTE: If different users log onto the computer, their individual Break Reminder settings and options will be retained.

Sounds

Sounds can be accessed and changed via the Tools menu.

If you have speakers, they can be turned on or off and the volume will be at the system volume which is normally adjusted in the control panel, system tray or on the speakers themselves.

If you have it set to use the Internal speakers, the volume cannot be changed.

Depending on your system, sounds may not occur if you have another application using your sound card (eg Jukebox).

There are different sound schemes which can be selected using the drop-down menu.

External amplified speakers, or on a laptop computer, the built-in amplified speakers

Exercises and Stretches

1 ARM SHAKES

Sitting upright, drop shoulders into a relaxed position. Let arms hang loosely. Gently shake wrists and arms for the count of 5. Repeat 3 times.

2 WRIST TURNS

Sitting upright with arms hanging loosely, turn hands around one way until a gentle stretching is felt. Hold that position for the count of 5. Repeat 3 times in each direction.

3 FINGER SPREAD

Rest forearms on desk top or thighs. Stretch fingers apart and as if trying to make them longer. Hold stretched for 3 counts then relax hand for the count of 5. Repeat 3 times.

4 FORWARD LEAN

Rest elbows on the thighs near the knees. Let hands hang loosely. Relax shoulders. Breathe deeply in the base of the lungs. Stay relaxed in this position for 6 - 8 breaths.

5 HEAD TURNS

With slight chin tuck, turn head to one side then to the other. Hold for the count of 5 at the end of each turn. Repeat 5 times in each direction.

6 FORWARD AND BACK

Sitting upright with slight chin tuck, put hands on head with elbows forward. Bend head forward and allow the weight of the hands to add a little stretch. Take hands off head and tip head backwards as far as possible. Hold for the count of 5 at the end of each movement. Repeat 5 times in each direction.

7 SHOULDER CIRCLES

Sitting upright, hang arms by sides. Roll shoulders in a backward direction. Repeat 10 times.

8 CHIN TUCKS

Sitting upright, looking straight ahead. Without looking down, glide chin backwards to make a double chin. Hold for the count of 5. Repeat 5 times.

9 SIDE STRETCH AND HEAD TURN

Sitting upright, chin tucked in, turn head quarter turn to one side. Place the hand on that side on crown of head, hold seat with other hand. Bend head forward until a stretch is felt at the top of the shoulder blade. Hold for the count of 5. Repeat 5 times each side.

10 SIDE STRETCH

Sitting upright, hold onto the seat with one hand. Place other hand on top of head and gently tip head over to this side. Hold for the count of 5. Repeat 5 times each side.

11 FLEXOR STRETCH

Hold one arm straight out in front, palm up. Hold the front of the fingers with the other hand. Keeping fingers straight, bend the wrist back until a definite gentle stretch is felt in the forearm and wrist. Hold for 10 counts then relax stretch. Repeat 3 times.

12 EXTENSOR STRETCH

Rest one elbow on desk top with the thumb of this hand near your nose. Resting the other hand on the first hand,

bend the first hand forward until a definite gentle stretch is felt over the back of the wrist. Hold for 10 counts then relax. Repeat 3 times.

13 BACKWARD STRETCH

Sitting upright with good lower back support, clasp hands together with arms straight above head. Keeping arms straight take them backwards to stretch shoulders and upper back. Hold in stretched position for 5 counts. Repeat 5 times.

14 BACK BENDING

Standing with feet at shoulder width. Place hands on hips with fingers facing the centre of the back to support the lower spine. Bend backwards as far as possible. Hold this position for 10 counts. Repeat 5 times.

15 SHOULDER BRACING

Standing, clasp hands behind back. Brace shoulders back so that the shoulder blades move together. Hold at the limit of movement for 5 counts. Repeat 5 times.

Note: If you have had previous injuries, see your medical professional for exercises and stretching specifically for you.

Micropauses

A Micropause is a short break during your work, where you briefly stop what you are doing.

They typically last between 15 and 30 seconds, and should be used to relax the muscles being used, thus allowing blood to flow in these muscles, providing the healing and maintenance tasks that blood performs (like removing built-up lactic acid).

During a Micropause you should take your hands right away from the keyboard and mouse. You should also look at something else (possibly in the distance) to give your eyes a rest.

It is beneficial to perform a couple of basic stretching Exercises at this time.

Rest Breaks

A Rest Break is a long break from your work, where you completely stop what you are doing.

They typically last between 8 and 10 minutes, and should be used take a complete break.

During a Rest Break you should get up and go away from where you were working. You should perform several different stretching exercises. If possible go for a short walk and do something different (perhaps get a drink or snack).

Specific exercises and stretching techniques can be discussed with your medical professional, although if there is no prior injury, a variety of common-sense Exercises, followed by conscious relaxation of your hands, arms, neck and shoulders should be sufficient.

Reports

Reports are based on Logs and can be viewed by the month or by the day.

They can be printed off, or copied to the clipboard, from which they can be pasted into other documents.

They are convenient in a work situation when an employer needs to monitor employees usage, and to tell whether they have been using Break Reminder and taking their Micropauses and Rest Breaks.

Reports can only be accessed by the user who created them when logged onto the computer.

Logs

Most actions are logged in a files called LogYYYY_MM_Name.log in the same directory as this program, where the Y's indicate the year, the M's indicate the month and Name is the name of the user who was logged onto the computer at the time. If you do no log on, the name will be "Default". There is a new log file for each month.

This means that each user has their own history logs which can only be read with Break Reminder when they are logged on.

Note: History only valid from version 3.xx or later. If recently upgraded from earlier version, look in the folder where this program is situated, and open the earlier logs with Notepad.

They include when the program is opened, started, stopped, exited, Micropause ignored or Rest Break ignored.

This logging function can Not be turned off.

They are used for the Reports but can be viewed with any text editor.

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