



# Radical Rest Week Framework

## Background

In 2019, SPARK Reproductive Justice NOW!, Inc. (SPARK) pioneered the concept of Radical Rest Week as a deliberate act of resistance and self-nurturing in response to the pervasive culture of overwork and burnout prevalent in many organizations and movements, particularly within the Reproductive Justice and Black, Queer, and Trans Liberation movements. Recognizing the importance of prioritizing holistic well-being and sustainability, SPARK introduced this policy to challenge traditional notions of productivity and busyness, and to advocate for rest as a radical act of resistance against systems of oppression.

## Purpose

The Radical Rest Week framework and strategy, which later led to a policy and curriculum, was created to provide SPARK staff with dedicated time for rest, rejuvenation, and self-nurturing. It serves as a strategic intervention to combat burnout, foster employee well-being, and promote a culture of balance and sustainability within the organization. By prioritizing rest as a fundamental aspect of our organizational values and culture, SPARK aims to model a radical approach to self-and-community nurturing and resistance while advocating for systemic change in how we value and prioritize our health in our society.

At SPARK, we recognize rest as a necessity for individual well-being and a fundamental human right for combating white supremacy. Our commitment to Radical Rest extends beyond a designated week and is woven into the fabric of our organizational values and practices. We understand that rest is but a vital component of our collective resistance against oppressive systems. Through intentional rest and self-nurturing practices, we challenge the norms of overwork and burnout while centering the values of racial equity, liberation, and holistic well-being in our day-to-day work.

## Our Organization's Values

- SPARK's work and culture are rooted in the core principles of love, joy, and connection.
- **We value radical rest and wellness as practices of liberation.**



- We honor fluidity, adaptability, and growth as practices that allow us all to stand in our authenticity, intentionality, and truth.
- We strive to center folx who exist further in the margins and prioritize their needs and ideas.
- We engage in principled struggle to build deeper relationships and communities and lean into trust, honesty, grace, and accountability.
- We value freedom, equity, and accessible autonomy that is complete and unobstructed in all facets.

## **Acknowledgments**

SPARK affirms our commitment to creating a culture of radical rest that honors the resilience, joy, and humanity of BIPOC folx and challenges the oppressive systems that seek to exploit and exhaust us. We do so through our acknowledgments:

1. **Recognition of Ancestral Labor:** We acknowledge that BIPOC folx have historically shouldered the burden of labor in oppressive systems, and thus, deserve the opportunity to rest without guilt or shame. Our ancestors have paved the way for us, and our right is to honor their sacrifices by nurturing our bodies and spirits through rest.
2. **Challenging the Notion of Laziness:** We aim to combat the harmful stereotype that equates rest with laziness. Rest is not a sign of weakness but a necessary component of self-love and resistance against oppressive systems. We reject the notion that productivity is the sole measure of worth and value.
3. **Embracing "Laziness" as Liberation:** We challenge the stigma surrounding the concept of "laziness" and ask, what's wrong with being able to "laze"? Resting allows us to reclaim our time, prioritize our well-being, and resist the capitalist notion that our worth is tied to our productivity.
4. **The connection between BIPOC Joy and Rest:** We recognize the intrinsic connection between BIPOC joy and rest. Rest allows us to replenish our spirits, reconnect with our communities, and experience moments of joy and liberation. By prioritizing rest, we honor our capacity for joy and resilience in the face of oppression.
5. **Legacy of Black Labor and Capitalism:** We acknowledge the historical and ongoing exploitation of Black labor within Western capitalist systems. Generations of Black people have been relegated to service roles and commodified as laborers, perpetuating cycles of exploitation and inequity. Our right to nurture our bodies and rest is a direct response to this legacy of exploitation and resistance against systems that devalue our humanity.



6. Rest for the Sake of Rest: We recognize that rest does not have to exist as an award or incentive for productivity. Rather, rest exists as its own reward. We don't rest to sustain the work, we rest to sustain *ourselves*.

## Principles of Radical Rest Week

SPARK aims to consider seven (7) principles when implementing our practices of radical rest. These principles consist of:

1. Redefining “Success”: Challenge dominant narratives of productivity and success that prioritize constant hustle and sacrifice, and instead promote holistic measures of well-being and fulfillment.
2. The understanding that labor is draining: Movement work is heavy, and uplifting rest as a vital component of our strategy for freedom allows us to take necessary pause to recognize that as we do this work for our communities— we are also a part of the community too.
3. Challenging Constant Busyness: Reject the notion that constant busyness is synonymous with commitment to the cause. Promote a culture that values self-nurturing and collective well-being over the glorification of overwork and burnout.
4. Expanding the Definition of Rest: Define rest beyond simply sleep to encompass activities that promote relaxation, rejuvenation, and restoration of the mind, body, and spirit. Emphasize rest as a means of resistance against capitalist notions of productivity and worth.
5. Prioritizing Rest: Explore the concept of prioritizing rest within activist and advocacy movements and organizations. Recognize rest as a powerful form of resistance and ensure that all folx feel valued and supported in their well-being.
6. Redefining “Productivity”: Redefine productivity within activist spaces to include rest as a vital component of sustainable activism. Acknowledge that sustainable change requires a balance between action and pause.
7. Challenging Non-profit Industrial Complex: Challenge the expectations and obligations imposed by movement organizations within 501(c)3 guidelines. Advocate for policies and practices that prioritize well-being over productivity and challenge the non-profit industrial complex. Consider the things we *must* do as a movement organization within our 501(c)3 guidelines and the things we can do to challenge the non-profit industrial complex. We understand that every organization functions differently, and that is okay. The goal is to work towards challenging systems of oppression and capitalism including the systems we navigate and work within.



## **Implementation**

SPARK offers one Radical Rest Week (40 hours) per calendar year to all staff members. This designated week is typically scheduled after a Legislative session or at a collectively agreed-upon time of year between the SPARK team. Every person on staff must take the Radical Rest Week simultaneously, ensuring that the entire organization pauses together to prioritize rest. Importantly, the Radical Rest Week cannot be used in place of PTO/Vacation or sick leave, emphasizing its distinct purpose as dedicated time for rest and rejuvenation.

## **Impact**

Since its inception in 2019, the Radical Rest Week policy has not only benefited the SPARK staff but has also served as a model for other organizations within the Reproductive Health, Rights, and Justice movement(s). By prioritizing rest and self-nurturing as integral components of organizational culture, SPARK has sparked conversations and inspired others to reevaluate their approach to our work. Through collective action and solidarity, SPARK continues to advocate for policies and practices that prioritize the lives and health of individuals and communities.