11. REST

**Flic**

Hello everyone, you are listening to 3CR's special broadcast for International Day of People Disability. Before I kick off my time with you today, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the land in which I'm coming to you from today, the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation. I want to acknowledge that sovereignty has never been declared.

I am privileged to work, live and share my stories on lands which are not my own, and lands in which stories have been told long, long, long before I ever got here and will continue to be told by the traditional owners and custodians of the land. I would like to pay my respects to elder's past and present, for First Nations Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent who may be listening to this broadcast today.

**Flic**

Today, you will be hearing the voices of disabled people, and I'm one of them. My name is Flic Manning, you might be familiar with my voice because you could have heard me before on the Brainwaves show here on 3CR. But today I am here in my capacity as somebody who is disabled, and who has spent most of my life learning, relearning, and then mastering the skill of rest. Over the next hour, I have the privilege of sharing a little of that with you, what I've learned some of the science of rest and perhaps a few skills that you can try at home to improve, sustain or amplify your quality of life.

**Flic**

And I actually can't articulate entirely how honoured I am and how grateful I am to share all of this with you. Because representation is so important and disabled people rarely get the coverage they need and deserve despite us making up a fifth of the population. And let's face it, that number is definitely growing. Now while I may speak broadly about disability, it's essential to point out the disabilities are wide ranging and varied.

Some folks are visibly disabled. Some may use mobility aids, which we often call freedom devices, like canes and wheelchairs. Some may have invisible disabilities, which means they cannot be seen by the naked eye. Some have dynamic disabilities, meaning that their symptoms vary from day to day and what they need to do or use for functionality may change regularly as a result. There's really no one way to be disabled.

**Flic**

So if you're tuning in today, and you are disabled, however you're disabled, and whatever way you're disabled, I want you to know that your experience and disability is valid, that I believe you and in you and that I am deeply honored to be part of the community with you.

So for clarity, I have a range of chronic conditions that make up my disabilities from autoimmune conditions, like Crohn's disease, which is inflammatory bowel disease, misunderstood invisible ones like ME/CFS, or known as chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia.

And also my conditions and dynamics. So somedays getting out of bed is literally a no go. Sometimes I use a cane, she's red and sparkly, and I call her Ruby. And I got her because I didn't want my disability to have to be hidden, even though a lot of my disabilities are actually invisible.

**Flic**

So when I use my cane, I want people to know that I'm proud to use my freedom device, Ruby. I've also got a background in musical theater, so it's probably no surprise that I went for the sparkly one. Anyway, just so you know, if you ever see me with my bright, red ruby cane, I'm pretty happy to be using it, she makes my life so much easier. I also wear hearing aids and glasses, and I've experienced more medical gaslighting, or what I consider to be medical trauma than I can describe.

**Flic**

So I will be speaking from that position of my personal lived experience today and anecdotally about those that I work with, in my capacity as a wellbeing professional, as a neuroplastician, personal trainer, as a person that's an ambassador for several organisations supporting people with disabilities, chronic conditions and mental health conditions. I am also abundantly aware of my privilege as a white middle class person.

**Flic**

Sometimes I'm agonising and relentless pain. Sometimes the pain is functional, meaning you won't notice I'm in pain by looking at me, but I will know that I'm in pain and I will be taking certain actions to make sure that I am capable of functioning in the world. Like a lot of people with largely invisible disabilities, I have learned to function in a world that is not welcoming to people like myself. But it does not mean that my disability isn't with me every single day, there are no days off, it is always there.

**Flic**

And I pay my respects to every person of color, every non binary, trans LGBTQ i A plus person who faces even more discrimination than I would as a result of my disabilities. I am bisexual but again, at the same time, I still know that I don't experience the same level of discrimination as other people do in this space. I'm very, very clear on that.

And I just wanted to make sure that I was clear with you on that as well. I also want to note that I do remember my life as a child prior to becoming chronically sick and disabled. So I have some lens of experience of being able bodied too. I cannot speak for everyone with a disability. But I do hope that by sharing what I've learned today, you will feel less alone if you're disabled.

**Flic**

And if you're able bodied and listening to this, then I hope that you will come out of this more informed, better positioned to be a good ally, and to make decisions that are for the betterment of all human beings. Because despite our potential body or mind differences, we are all at the end of the day human beings. And each of us should have the right to a quality of life.

And I really dedicate my life to that concept to trying to help make that happen. When I was asked, what I would like to talk about today by the fab organisers of this special day of broadcasting, the list was really mighty long, it was very hard for me to narrow it down.

But I settled on this, I would like to talk about the concept of rest as it pertains to chronically sick and disabled people. That we're frankly the experts of maintaining and sustaining in a world that tries to often to silence, ignore and get rid of us, our skills in the art of rest should be the gold standard to which others look to.

**Flic**

And also they should look to how we have had to learn and can learn to find rest in our bodies. And in a world that makes it complex for us to exist and to be treated with equality. It's pretty encompassing with a little side of defiance, and some science and a dash of room to allow for our unique humaneness, which is all kind of my brand.

So stay with me today as I try to take you through as much of that as I can, in sort of a digestible way. One of the things I do quite often, is I go into organisations, and particularly during the pandemic, that's been largely online, but I go into all sorts of different kinds of organisations, government groups, not for profit startups, and so on, to talk about chronic illnesses, to talk about disabilities.

To talk about some of the science of self care, I talk about my book, Living Human, which is my memoir about my life with invisible disabilities. And I always share no matter who it's with. And I start with a breathing exercise. And I'm actually going to do the same with you today. And I know that it's probably a little left of centre, being a radio broadcast, but it's for a very good reason. And I'll explain that in a moment.

**Flic**

So our breathing plays a massive role in our ability to find rest. While we're in action. While we're thinking, while we're in pain, while we're sleeping, it's actually in everything that we do, it also affects our ability to learn, to take in new information, because how we breathe determines part of what I refer to as optimal learning conditions.

You see, our brains and bodies are these complex, super interconnected organisms. So even breathing through the nose versus the mouth can change how our brains direct our bodies to then function. So I want to create the best possible learning condition for you to be with me today on this journey into rest so that you can take in as much information as you can, in a restful, peaceful, calm state. So basically, I would love for your brain, your nervous systems, your neurotransmitters, your hormones, all of it to be in the best version of alignment that they can be throughout this broadcast.

**Flic**

So that's really why we're gonna do a breathing exercise today, we're going to slow things down, we're going to connect with ourselves. So you can do this sitting, standing, laying, you can do it when you're making the dinner for the kids, you can do this on a school pickup run, you can do this when you're on the toilet for the 50th time today, like some of us with inflammatory bowel disease might go through, it's really sustainable, and it's free.

**Flic**

So you've got to love that. Okay, so wherever you are, take a moment settle in, allow yourself to sink into the space that you're in, to sink into your body, even if there's discomfort present. When you just focus on your breathing, and take a few deep breaths in through the nose, and out through your mouth, if you can.

Do it at a pace that feels really comfortable for you, don't overthink it. Just focus on the fact that you are breathing and feel the sensation of the breath going in. And the breath going out. I'm going to do this with you. We're going to be hearing me breathing over the air. So if the speed in which I breathe is a little too fast or a little too slow, that's okay. Adjust it to suit yourself.

I want to do it with you mainly so that there isn't complete dead air and you're forced to think where did she go? I'm sure I was listening to someone talking to me. So let's do this together folks. Again, bringing you that focus to the breath and inhaling.

**Flic**

Exhaling. Inhale, exhale. Inhale, exhale. Good, you can keep going. Now, if you'd like to only breathe in from your nose and out from your nose now, it's gonna really help you to create a sense of calm. If you have to use your mouth. That's totally okay. Don't stress.

This is still going to be pretty effective. And this time when you breathe, rather than just focusing on the breath, I want you to count in your head as you do your breath. So you're going to count up to four as you inhale through the nose, and up to four as you exhale through that.

The aim here is to try and make the inhale and the exhale about the same length of time. Again, the pace is totally up to how you feel. So again, if my counting is too fast or too slow for you, feel free to ignore my counting. As I said, I just want to make sure that you don't feel like you've just dropped out of the broadcast. So we're going to try this together. So we're all in that same boat.

**Flic**

So bringing that attention to the breath again. Breathing in through the nose for 1234, exhale, 1234. Inhale, 1234, exhale, 1234. Inhale, 1234, exhale, 1234. Fabulous, my friends. Now feel free to continue doing that, as you're listening to me, the more often that you do it, the more effective that these kinds of things are. Particularly if you're not used to doing breathing exercises.

Sometimes it can take a couple of minutes things to sort of click in, once you're really practiced at it, it can become very effective in less than a minute. So do you do whatever feels comfortable, but I do encourage you to come back to the breath through this podcast as I would encourage you to do throughout your life.

**Flic**

Then the question really becomes why would I suggest breathing? I mean, we all do it, right? We do it, whether we're thinking about it or not. Well, because rest is an essential thing for all human beings, and especially for those of us who are in pain, who have chronic conditions or disabilities. And rest to me is actually best described in this acronym. Rest is realistic energy sustaining tactics. Again, realistic energy sustaining tactics. And that's what we're going to be focusing on largely today.

**Flic**

See, we get oxygen from breathing without oxygen, and we are all kaput. But what's one of the most common things that humans do in pain, in stressful situations or when they're really thinking hard about something, they stop breathing, or they hyperventilate or they hold their breath. Now, in terms of hyperventilation, we actually suck in air through our mouths involuntarily.

And we actually hyperventilate for a reason. We do that so that fight or flight mode can be activated, so that we can get away from that big bear chasing us down into the cave, or from that 150th email that lands in our inbox, or the kids that won't stop screaming at each other, or the shooting pain in our back, or the concerns for how we're going to pay for that MRI.

**Flic**

My point is that when we don't breathe calmly, when we breathe only through the mouth, when we hyperventilate or hold our breath, we let the least of all parts of our brain tell our nervous system, the sympathetic nervous system to run the show.

And when the amygdala, our lizard brain, or that part of the brain is activated in fight or flight is calling the shots, we really can't do much except to get away from or fight the thing that has set us off in the first place.

But in the case of those of us with chronic conditions or disabilities, very often our amygdala gets to call the shots a lot of the time as we're so often in pain or discomfort or stress, either from the conditions themselves that we're living with, or from the continuous ableism that makes it very difficult for us to find a way to be treated equally in the world that we live in.

**Flic**

When our sympathetic nervous system is triggered, we release adrenaline and cortisol, the aim being to give us a boost of short term energy and alertness to combat any immediate pain and stress from that into either get us moving or give us the ability to hide. So you may notice a few things that could get activated or give you the indication that maybe your amygdala is calling the shots.

It could be that your heart starts racing and beating faster, you may find that you start to sweat. When you get a cold sweat, you may find that your stomach or your gut sucks in nice and tight to your body, that your shoulders involuntarily lift up towards your chin covering up your neck.

**Flic**

It could be that your eyes become really wide and alert. That's because they are designed in that way to take in more information to help you to get away or hide from that thing that has set off the fight or flight reaction. So these are all signs that you're in that mode.

And for example, when we are in that mode, you know, we run into all sorts of issues, particularly if that's being chronically used. It often actually compounds the very nature of what we're living with. So for example, when we're in fight or flight, our immune system actually can't function properly as most of the function of our immune system is using our gut.

**Flic**

And when fight or flight is set off, our blood supply is sent to our extremeties. And that means that our organs like our gut don't have that fresh oxygenated supply of blood coming into the gut that helps us to digest food, to pull nutrients from it, to operate the immune system properly. So a lot of people will actually throw up as part of fight or flight or feel really nauseous or have no appetite.

 And it's because in part, the body knows that it cannot digest food, without that fresh blood supply, without that fresh oxygen. So it empties out before food decays in the gut, and also to make us physically lighter. So that is easier, we have more almost like being more aerodynamic, we can get away faster, because we are lighter.

**Flic**

But we also have this horrid post fight or flight chemical dump. It's a little bit similar to, imagine you've had five cups of coffee in a row, and you're buzzing, you're super alert. But when that wears off, you're really frazzled, you're fatigued, you might feel nauseated, or sick, have no appetite, you might have a headache, you might find that you're unable to think clearly to remember things.

You know when super emotional about something, it gets messy. So by manually breathing in a calm way, by breathing, particularly in just through the nose, so that we avoid that feeling of hyperventilating or sucking and holding our breath in, our cardiovascular system feeds back to our brain that we don't need to put the amygdala in charge right now, which means we don't need the sympathetic fight or flight system to be set off. We don't need to pump adrenaline and cortisol because there's nothing to run away from, we can function as is.

**Flic**

So when we are not functioning from that nervous system, when we are a bit calmer, we actually tell the brain, it's okay to operate from the parasympathetic nervous system, the one that keeps the body functioning, the one that sort of says to the brain, hey, we're all good in the hood, go about your business, do your thing, nothing to worry about here. Now, because the brain and nervous systems operate like Marco Polo, they're always calling out to one another, always talking and listening and trying to find ways to align with one another effectively.

**Flic**

So my aim was sharing that moment of breath with each and every one of you was to help to reduce any sympathetic nervous system action that could be happening for you right now, to stop the mental load from being the part of the brain that's in charge.

So that that will help you to position yourself from a parasympathetic nervous system or functioning point of view. You're less likely to need adrenaline and cortisol in mass quantities. So you can actually produce things like serotonin, dopamine, and oxytocin, which will help you to feel emotionally and physically more evenly keeled, even in the experience of pain and stress.

**Flic**

So in other words, to sustain a restful state or create homeostasis, and that will allow you to have more cognitive function, so that you can then concentrate and listen to what I'm talking to you about. And really come into knowing that having the knowledge of something is great. I'm sharing these things with you.

But the real awesome sauce is in your ability to apply it with knowledge of why you would want to. So putting you in that optimal learning condition of being calmer. And being in that restful state allows that to occur.

**Flic**

That my friends, is part of creating a neural pathway or brain training yourself into a method of rest that you can start to immediately use. Well, think of using when you face pain or stress. So none of it shows up by accident, we have to kind of put it there.

And frankly, most of us aren't really taught how to do any of this stuff, we're kind of taught to avoid the process of pain and emotion and stress and things like that. But you know, when you're chronically ill, when you're disabled, we have to learn how to realistically sustain our energy.

**Flic**

And that's where that acronym, realistic energy sustaining tactics or rest, actually comes from. And breathing is one of those fantastic methods that you can use. You may already be aware of this, you may already be doing it and absolute kudos and bravo to you.

If you are, I hope that you are still happily breathing away as you're listening to me talking about it. But if you have not tried these things, I do encourage you to give breathing a go. Focusing on the breath, try and breathe in through the nose and out through the nose if possible to do so, with a bit of practice.

**Flic**

It's actually really amazing at how much energy that you can actually start to sustain and maintain by understanding a little bit about how to switch from one nervous system to the other. So as I said, if you are not pumping adrenaline, cortisol constantly, you can better sustain your energy which gives you the resources in the body to do more than just survive.

 Now it's not necessarily about being quote unquote normal. Trying to behave and act like everybody else. It's trying to create a quality of life with the full conditions that come with your package. And that may include you know, disabilities or chronic illnesses or chronic pain or mental health conditions or all of the above.

**Flic**

Whatever it is, that should be inclusive of your quality of life rather than looking always to do things separate to that, because they all kind of come as a package deal. Breathing calmly, is a really cost effective tactic that you can use day and night. It’s a pretty fab gift also that you can give to people in your life. This is one of the things that I love to teach, I love teaching this skill that I learned courtesy of my disability, with parents of young kids and in corporate settings.

And I do this particularly with parents so that the parents can learn how to handle stress and pain and demonstrate that to their children. So if you're doing a breathing exercise, like the one that we went through before, it's called calm breathing, funnily enough, because it's all about creating calm in for four, out for four through the nose.

**Flic**

When your children get to see you do that, rather than holding on to stress, bottling it up, taking yourself away to deal with emotional pain, you know, that actually teaches them then how to deal with stress and pain by creating rest, right?

**Flic**

Giving them realistic energy sustaining tactics. Because stress and pain and emotion, they can all really detract from the energy that you have, they can actually pull away from those resources. So it's about learning to sustain them. And when kids mirror their parents in that way, it's a really beautiful gift and actually creates an environment where it's more safe to experience emotion to experience difference.

**Flic**

And that is one way that we can actually start to break down and erode this concept of othering of disabled people that may be, you know, in our lives. In fact, I have to say, even my own husband, just by watching me do it so often throughout the day, he now turns to it without me having to really instruct him. When he's stressed, when he's in pain, and when he's going through something, he comes back to the breath.

And he also uses other techniques that I'll go through with you in a little bit as well. But because he's then capable of doing that he understands why it works. He's mirrored what he's been in the environment of so often, it also positions me to know that, when I'm in my hardest moments, when I'm facing that severe fatigue and brain fog, and I'm in a lot of pain, or maybe I've had painsomnia for nights on end, where I'm unable to sleep properly because of pain, he can help to guide me back to the breath in those moments too.

**Flic**

And that really helps me to sustain what energy I have, so that my body can try and function the best possible way that it can particularly keeping my immune system in check. Because I do have an autoimmune disease as part of my disability. This was kind of a gift. If you learn how to breathe and do these things, it's kind of a gift that keeps on giving, because we pass it from one person to the next.

What a fabulous gift that you can give someone this coming holiday season. It's free, it's sustainable, it's lovely. So I encourage you to give it a go, to show people in your life and in your workplace, actually, that this is something that is totally normal.

**Flic**

And rest is an essential state for all human beings. And that you perhaps as a disabled person, if you are, you are the gold standard, and you are the master of being able to do these things. And perhaps that brings me to this point about the way people like myself with disabilities have had to learn to rest as being that gold standard in which people to look to.

And I was actually only chatting to someone else yesterday that noted that people like myself, we have become in many ways actually much more efficient and productive. Because we learn to use the functional time we have in ways that many able bodied people don't have to. So where the societal view may be that we can't or we shouldn't work in a corporate nine to five setting, for example, because our body may not comply with that perfect timeline, we often can actually get the work done in less hours.

**Flic**

But perhaps it's from the comfort of our own bed or our own home. Doing your work from home situation, working part time, having flexible hours, we get the work done, we're very capable of doing it, we just have to do it a slightly different way.

**Flic**

Because we have learned to infuse rest, right? We may be having the laptop in the bed with us because our body needs to be in a restful state. We've embraced stress, we've learned how to use it to our maximum advantage and to then become really productive and efficient as a result. So our experience is incredibly valuable and we could actually teach a lot of people how to do more with less time and therefore have that more time to simply be human rather than whatever, work.

That we do whatever responsibilities and commitments we've made. We've really had to learn how to embrace rest as an essential part of actually being and staying alive. And because of that experience, we know we have value and can actually make other people more productive too as I mentioned.

**Flic**

If only they listen to our experiences, and I hope if you are able bodied you are listening to this today. We can actually coexist together, we just have to do it slightly differently. And there's nothing inherently wrong with that. It's just that we know how to infuse rest into our day rather than looking at rest as this separate thing.

And look, I want to just take a little aside here, I mean, to be frank it doesn't seem like all the folks working nine to five Monday to Friday seem entirely healthy, happy and stress free. Nope. If they were we wouldn't see so many people rushing out over the weekend to let loose, blow their cash get as many dopamine hits as they can from doing entirely unsustainable things, which they may call rest because they haven't been taught any different. And then start Monday on a chemical low, with no real rest in their body only to repeat the whole thing again.

**Flic**

I mean, that's not really a sustainable way to live. And it's not really a way to honour the beauty and complexity of our human design. I believe anyway, so how about we all inject a little rest into everyday instead, I'll leave you with that thought. In a moment. We'll be back. For more on this special day. This International Day of People with t coverage.

**Voiceover**

You're listening to a 3CR broadcast. 3CR is an independent community radio station based in Melbourne, Australia. We need your financial support to keep going. Go to www.3CR.org.au for more information and to donate online. Now stay tuned to hear the rest of your 3CR podcast.

**Flic**

Welcome back to 3CR. My name is Flic Manning and I'm joining you for this special International Day of People with Disability event. I'm really honoured to be here with all of you today, sharing a little bit about my experience and my feelings around rest as somebody who is disabled. If you tuned into the first half of this broadcast, we've been through a little bit of breathing technique with you. A calm breathing technique, which is inhaling for a count of four and exhaling for a count of four, ideally through your nose.

**Flic**

We've also been talking about our nervous systems, our parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous systems, parts of our brain like the amygdala, and some of the chemicals which we actually release as part of those activations or deactivations, like adrenaline and cortisol. And learning that even our breath, even where we breathe from, can really determine what our brain tells our body to do.

**Flic**

So as often as you can, even if you've never tried it before, even as you're listening to me broadcasting to you today, you can breathe in for four and out for four, and try to bring yourself into a restful state. And a little reminder, again, that that wonderful acronym that I like to use for rest is realistic energy sustaining tactics. So we're going to talk a little bit more about that as we go.

So jump on in, tune in, turn it up, make yourself comfortable, you do you, I'm just really, really feeling grateful and privileged to be here and to put some representation to disability today. Now, in my capacity of the kind of work that I do, I have actually spent a lot of time especially in the last couple of years, I think, as I mentioned before, teaching people how to sort of hack their brains and bodies for better productivity, how to make their meeting time shorter, their meetings more effective by doing the exact breathing exercises that I went through with you moments ago and earlier in this broadcast.

And I do those at the start of meetings, this is something that I do personally in my own life. And it's been really, really helpful to kind of get everybody in on the same page. And as also an actual demonstration of wellbeing or rest in action.

**Flic**

So I really like to say to people, yeah, I know, it's probably going to feel a little bit odd because what we're used to doing is ignoring all of our human failings, and going into a boardroom and sitting together and just trying to bash out an idea. And quite often what we end up doing is just feeling really tense, spending a whole hour or so in a room with other people only to have really just worked out that we need another meeting out of that meeting.

**Flic**

So really, very little productivity has come out of it. And then out of the meeting, you've then got to work on the stuff - like you don't actually get more for what done. One of the ways that we can improve that is to bring rest into the workplace just in the same way that rest is constantly having to be brought into the lives of people with disability and chronic illness. And you can do that just by breathing, because it does change the parts of the brain that are functioning, what the brain is telling the body in terms of which of our nervous systems to operate.

**Flic**

And in that, which of our chemicals and hormones it should release. So it plays a huge, huge, huge role in our overall ability to create homeostasis or an ability to rest. And this is including finding rest while we're stressed, while we're in discomfort, while we're in pain, not just when we're in joy, not just when we're inspired or feeling excited or feeling loved. It is in every single state that a human being can live. But one of the observations I have made by doing this exact kind of work is, it's really super clear to me that rest is this really fun concept for a lot of people, but really less so for people like me.

**Flic**

And I'm not just talking about relaxation, like an actual vacation or stepping away from your life to do something completely different. That is fabulous, and it has its place. But it's not something that you can sustain daily, whether it be by cost or opportunity, or getting time off to do it. I'm not talking about that - I'm talking about rest - realistic energy sustaining tactics. Yes, I'm gonna say it over and over again, because I'm creating that neural pathway in your brain, which you're going to come back to, and reinforce with your own brilliant, unique take on it. Realistic energy sustained tactics.

**Flic**

You see, as I mentioned before, as well, we are the gold standard masters of that, and I think we should be recognised for it. So if you're a master at rest, and you're listening, I celebrate you, I really do - well done, keep on doing it, don't stop for anybody or anything. It is fabulous. You are fabulous.

So all the warm fuzzies, all the warm fuzzies. For all of you who are listening today that are resting, and for those that don't know how to do it, maybe this is your catalyst to give it a go, to try. And also to understand what the experience of having to infuse that into your life is actually like.

**Flic**

If you really think about it, rest is a totally essential thing for all of us. You know, the body runs off what we provide it, and only what we provide it, that is what food we give it, what drinks we give it, what we consume on telly, radio, books, social media, it's the people we live with, we work with, we hang around, all of these things are a form of consumption.

And all of these affect our energy resources. And therefore our ability to function. Well, this goes for all human beings, regardless of your health status, your mental health status, it's just across the board. And each of us are going to have their own particular way that we find rest to be useful for us. It's not a one size fits all thing, it does require some exploration, I encourage you to embrace your humanity and to do that exploration.

**Flic**

Crying is just a chemical reset. The brain doesn't differentiate the reason why you cry. It doesn't look at something and it only says, "Well, I'm only gonna cry at very negative things", or "I'll only cry when I'm really angry". Well, we cry for all sorts of reasons. We cry because we're tired. We cry because we're angry, fearful, jealous, we cry when we're in love.

When we feel overwhelmed by being seen, nurtured, we can cry because we're inspired, surprised. You know, because we feel joy. There's literally an endless list of reasons why we cry. And the reason why that list is so endless is actually because we don't differentiate, the brain doesn't differentiate, it simply goes, I have been over stimulated, I'm so stimulated and that overstimulation is drawing resources out of me rather than maintaining them. And it's making me, your brain, find it much harder to do my job of keeping you alive, and keeping your immune system functioning and keeping all the things going at the same time.

**Flic**

So we cry in order to reset, that reset is actually oxytocin. This is a wonderful, beautiful, delicious chemical that we release, again for a lot of fabulous reasons. Yes, we release it when we're crying, that's part of us coming back into that chemical reset state bringing us back into homeostasis. But we also release it when we fall in love.

When we feel valued or safe, seen and heard. We release it when we are being hugged or having our hands held or being physically touched by someone that we care about. We release it during sex, we release it at the birth of a baby, when there's skin to skin contact with mother or father or whoever else in the family.

**Flic**

These are all common states are releasing oxytocin, and is one of the reasons why we feel the need to embrace one another. When we are going through times of stress, or times of discomfort, grief or pain. It's because we inherently know at that deep human level, that by touching one another, why rubbing each other's backs, we stimulate our vagus nerve, our parasympathetic nervous system, and we release oxytocin, which allows us to come back to a state that the body and brain can function in.

So yeah, having a big old snot rolling down your face cry is actually a restful state, it's actually a way to bring your body into a state of rest. And I think we really should embrace that, we get told a lot not to do it, we end up telling each other a lot not to do it, we question each other while we do it.

**Flic**

So if we are listening, whether we're able bodied, whether we are disabled, I really encourage you to focus on that and to really think about embracing your tears, embracing the process of having a cry. And as you work through that, allowing other people to see that this is nothing to have any shame about. To be of any specifically negative concern, that we can be with one another.

Or we can even be alone in that restful state by crying, and then it's a perfectly natural, in built system that we are designed to do. I mean, we produce tears for a reason, it doesn't just happen, because it is really all inbuilt into our human design. And it's one of the sustainable ways that we can create a state of rest, we can come back to a place where we are not drawing resources from the body by holding back our tears and holding back our emotions, but by actually allowing our body to release them, for whatever reason they are there.

So that we can come back to a state of rest and allow ourselves to have the energy and resources for our body to do its job to try and function as best we can. And those of us who are in a lot of pain, please cry if you feel the need to.

**Flic**

I really, really encourage you to do so it is so, not just good for your mental health, in terms of being cathartic. It is so physically good for you to let go of those emotions, whether they're coming from that negativity, whether they're coming from something positive, from love, from excitement, from joy, whatever, even if it's just coming from fatigue, let yourself cry, let yourself have that oxytocin. Again.

Rest is not about stepping away and having a vacation from your life or from yourself. It's about looking the things that are already inbuilt into your human design and into the things that you can include in your life. Those moments of breathing exercises. Those kinds of things are really important. So this means that when we're thinking about what is rest for us, we need to take into consideration our lifestyle. Our budget, our support systems, our goals and yes, our hardworking bodies and minds.

**Flic**

So as I mentioned, it's about finding ways to create a quality of life that are inclusive of all that we are. Disease, pain, all of it included in that picture. I want to of course, point out here that ableism is a factor in our ability to define and achieve a restful state.

So in case you are not aware, if this is not part of your lived experience, many disabilities are not recognised or covered by NDIS. I'm certainly in that boat, it means that people like me have to have an income in some way shape or form, as we will not be supported by the government.

**Flic**

And it means that we cannot get cheaper medical care either. So that can not only be really, but add a detrimental level of stress, which makes it hard for us to maintain our wellbeing. Many workplaces will not accommodate or even consider working with a disabled person. And I have certainly been discriminated against so many times.

And in truth, it's a big reason why I work for myself. Many of us are capable of working. We have a lot to offer, but the world still considers us to not even be human and therefore not deserving of fair treatment, have a right to opportunity, have a right to equality. People speak for us.

They speak about us, they decide for us without ever really asking what we need. And understanding that when we give that information to you, we are telling the truth and that you are more than capable of accommodating it.

**Flic**

We may struggle to find doctors that believe that we're even disabled or ill in the first place. Medical gaslighting is an ongoing trauma for so many of us, very sadly, it can also be expensive, emotionally draining and traumatising to find and get help.

I mean, how can one afford endless tests like MRIs, if they're not able to get a job due to the ableism that exists in society or to find a doctor that will even help organise it? What if your body requires these ongoing appointments that happen and of course can only happen, Monday to Friday during work hours. And the flexibility at your work, if you're able to get work, doesn't exist.

So you can't go to all of these appointments. There's so many layers and obstacles that we face in order to survive, let alone thrive. And that's not okay. It's really really not okay. And that's why my focus is on realistic energy sustaining tactics, stuff I can do for free stuff that may not need much equipment, stuff that affects the body and mind purposely and with a real kindness and love for stuff that directly tackles the nervous systems and neurotransmitters that are released or stopped by the nervous systems when they're triggered. And I encourage you to take the full breadth of that information if you can.

**Flic**

To recognise if you are able bodied, that you have such privilege, and that you are in a position to help all of us to have that equality and to achieve that state of rest. And to be able to do it without shame, because we're all human, and we all deserve rest. If you are disabled, and chronically ill please know that however you need to rest is perfectly valid. And perfectly fine. I believe you. I see you, I hear you, I understand you.

And as I mentioned before, I'm so deeply honoured to be in this community with each and every one of you. We are the masters of rest, we know so much more about the experience of living inside the human body, we have such innate value because of that, and such skills because of that. And for anyone listening at home, that's still going, I don't really see how rest is going to fit into my day. I'm gonna give you a prime example.

Because you know, I'm an oversharer. And, as I mentioned very early in this broadcast, I do have inflammatory bowel disease, Crohn's disease, which means that there are some days where I will have to go to the toilet 20, 30, 50 times in a day. And that means sometimes sitting in those public toilets that have those light sensors, so when people stop moving coming in out of the bathroom, they the lights turn off, and it's an energy saving tactic.

But of course, it's not exactly the most accessible thing in the world. Because there are people like me out there, a couple 100,000 of us in Australia alone, that will go to the toilet a lot. And that means that we're sitting there for longer than those lights can actually stay on. So sometimes I do find myself sitting there in pitch black darkness in a public toilet. It's not the most comfortable experience.

But I try to find ways to infuse rest in everything I do, because I understand the importance of sustaining my energy and to use those tactics that are free and readily available to me. So I go, You know what, I'm in the dark. And that means that one of my senses, my sight is not being stimulated. So I'm being a bit more restful, if I'm capable of it. I will do a breathing exercise when I'm sitting on the toilet rather than sitting there and scrolling through my phone endlessly and over draining my dopamine supply.

**Flic**

So rest can come from anywhere. It can come all the time. It doesn't necessarily have to be something that you go, you know what, I'm going to do that at 5:30. When I finish my work day. If it requires lots of obstacles. In other words, you need a special outfit, special equipment, have to go to a special location, all those kinds of things, they can become barriers to entry.

To create a sustainable version of rest, that's more like things that you do for relaxation, things that step outside of the realm of your normal world. Rest is about finding things that infuse into the everyday those circumstances like finding yourself in the loo with no light on and finding a way to look at that and to embrace that as going right, well, my sight isn't being stimulated.

**Flic**

And actually I'm sitting here, I can't go anywhere right now. So now's the time to do a breathing exercise and to try and help my body operate from the parasympathetic nervous system, like all of these things are there, and they are there for us whether we are disabled or able bodied or not. So I encourage each of you to spend some time this evening, tomorrow, in the coming days thinking about your life, being mindful and looking at all the ways in which you can infuse rest, you can embrace rest, and find those things that work for you. That music that's going to transport you to a different place in terms of your neurotransmitters.

That breathing exercise through the nose, that's going to, from your cardiovascular system tell your brain "Hey, things are okay, we can still be in this state". Letting yourself cry if you need to cry, journaling in a book. Stretching. Whatever it is that works for you, is totally valid. And I encourage you to use it as often as you can, every single day because the body actually requires rest every single day. That's just how it works.

**Flic**

Now with all of that aside, I wanted to finish off, I am an author, I wanted to finish off with some writing. Something that I mentioned to the organisers of this beautiful day of recognition of our disability that I wanted to do. And this is just, it's just a few paragraphs of my experience, my view of disability, and I hope that you will relate to it.

And I will come back and say my my goodbyes to you at the end of this broadcast as well. But before I do sign off, I really do hope that something that I've shared with you today clicks. That maybe you've seen a different side of disability, that you've maybe been able to see that there is a lot that we learn as a result of disability and chronic illness, that is so incredibly valuable to the whole world.

**Flic**

If you're in a position to help be an ally and to make room for us, please do so. You could go to bed tomorrow perfectly fine and wake up the next day with a chronic illness or a disability or have an accident that changes your life fundamentally and forever. You could be one of us without any prior warning.

What you would find in our community is love and empathy and compassion and so much help and support for one another. But I hope that even if you never become one of us in that way, that you will become a great ally. And if you are already disabled and chronically ill, I hope that you feel seen, safe, valued and heard. And to know that I always have your back. I am always there and you can reach out to me anytime online.

**Flic**

I love connecting with everybody from our community. So anyway, here's a little bit of writing for you from me. And I just hope it makes you feel sane. To me disability is laid out like a dramatic narrative that has been told forever and has been passed down to all of us generationally in the form of trauma and pain and joy and indifference in history books and campfire tales.

It's not all roses and medals and trophies and parades and overcoming and being the shining beacon of ableist inspiration porn. Usually it's none of those things at all. It's a cobblestone street from the 1700s that appears too hard to traverse. An ankle roller, a knee scraper, a cannot get off the ground nightmare that you don't always wake from. It's bitumen, tarred and black warping in the Australian heat while your skin reddens and your eyes glaze over with lightheaded vertigo worry about putting one foot in front of the other or rolling forward. It's endless corridors and beeping machines, tubes and needles and cold white thick sheets that offer the same level of comfort as a blanket made out of used tote bags, roughly stitched together and laid over you haphazardly like your furniture instead of a human being needing gentle love and care and recognition of your worthy life.

**Flic**

It's gray skies and grating noises, white noises. The hustle and bustle of the world that would have forgotten me if only it remembered that I existed in the first place. It's the inability to fit into the world that I've outgrown, that I've out learned and I've been outpatiented by. It's people of authority and knowledge, blocking doors and refusing to take notes, and leaving comments on files that make my future uncertain.

It's information shared by self proclaimed heroes applauded by those without lived experience that adds a weight to the load already carried by the misfits leftover when the world decided what was normal. It's like splashing your arms as you go under in a pool, surrounded by lifeguards who have decided to let you drown instead of getting in the water with you.

**Flic**

It is me still be in here living successfully in a way that I defined for me right in front of you without feeling an ounce of shame because the shame was your projection, never my own. It is the online embrace of millions, somehow considered a small group when we are in fact this large group with so much life, so much experience.

So much talent, so much raw, delicious, divine humanity ready and able to show more compassion to others, that it's actually overwhelmingly incredible. It's finding new ways year on year as my forever home, this body of skin and bone and fascia and tissue and nerve, as it changes and decays and shifts.

**Flic**

Finding new ways to show it the love that the world wants to deny it and doing it with flourish and confidence. Life is a cabaret old chum. But a life of disability and illness is more like a dark musical or a heart wrenching opera. It is not always pleasant. It is a dichotomy that we have been taught that a life worth living is only one that is of being happy and normal.

And being normal and happy. Is there anything of value, but our opera, our dark grizzly musical, is full of power and tenderness in joy and grief, and a kind of emotion that comes from finding rest within the restlessness, that sound magic. That's our gift. That's our value. And I guess perhaps that's my little love letter to each and every one of you.

**Flic**

As you listen to this today, being part of this community with you, has been one of the greatest joys of my life. It took me a very long time to recognise and to be comfortable with my disability despite having lived with it for over 20 years. And that is largely because of the knowledge, the empathy, the compassion, the skill of rest that each and every one of you has taught me. I hope that you feel loved, because I certainly love you.

And I hope that wherever you are, in whatever circumstance you find yourself in that you can find realistic, energy sustaining tactics that help you to amplify to improve or to sustain the quality of life that you so rightly deserve. Thank you for being with me today on 3CR on this International Day of people with a Disability. My name again is Flic Manning.I'll speak to you next time I'm on 3CR. Bye for now.

**Voiceover**

You've been listening to a 3CR broadcast produced in the studio's of independent community radio station 3CR in Melbourne, Australia. For more information, go to www.3CR.org.au