

# Stay Happy, Stay Healthy & Stay Vacationed!



## Why Vacations are So Important:

Research shows Americans work more than anyone in the industrialized world. They also take less vacation, work longer days and retire later.

Productivity and stress management trainer and coach, Joe Robinson, author of, “Work to Live” and “Don’t Miss Your Life,” says the issue is driven by a number of factors. Namely, work force cutbacks and lean staffing make it difficult for people doing the jobs to get away. People are also afraid to take vacations in the “layoff era” for fear that they will appear less committed than coworkers.

However, a number of studies have shown that taking time away from the job can have physical and psychological health benefits. People who take vacations have lower stress, less risk of heart disease, a better outlook on life, and more motivation to achieve goals. If you still need a little convincing, here is a list of some of the additional benefits of taking time away from work:

- **Improved physical health:** Stress can contribute to heart disease and high blood pressure. For both men and women, the New York Times reported, taking a vacation every two years compared to every six will lessen the risk of coronary heart disease or heart attacks.
- **Improved mental health:** Neuroscientists have found that brain structure is altered by chronic exposure to the stress hormone cortisol, which can be a major contributing factor to anxiety and depression. Feelings of calm arise from time away from work and relieve stress, which allows the body and mind to heal in ways that it couldn’t if it were still under pressure.
- **Greater well-being:** According to a Gallup study, people who “always make time for regular trips” had a 68.4 score on the Gallup-Heathway’s Well-Being Index, in comparison to a 51.4 Well-Being score for less frequent travelers. One study found that three days after vacation, subjects’ physical complaints, quality of sleep, and mood had improved as compared to before vacation. These gains were still present five weeks later, especially in those who had more personal time and overall satisfaction during their vacation.
- **Increased mental power:** Upon returning from vacation, workers are often more focused and productive. Studies

have found that chronic stress can actually modulate a part of the brain that inhibits goal-directed activity and can cause problems with memory. Time off can tune up a well-functioning brain.

- **Improved familial relationships:** Spending time enjoying life with loved ones can keep relationships strong. A study by the Arizona Department of Health and Human Services found that women who took vacations were more satisfied with their marriages. Research has also uncovered a correlation between children’s academic achievement and summer family vacations. These shared experiences promote family bonding, which is priceless. Family vacations create more memories than any other activity. In fact, other studies have found people place a higher value on the shared experiences they have on vacations than the material goods they have acquired during their lifetime.
- **Decreased burnout:** Workers who take regular time to relax are less likely to experience burnout, making them more creative and productive than their overworked, under-rested counterparts. Studies show that more vacation time for workers actually increases company productivity, and has been found to decrease the number of sick days taken off.
- **Planning alone boosts happiness:** Research shows the biggest boost in happiness comes from planning the vacation. A person can feel the effects up to eight weeks before the trip!
- **Keeps you young:** Chronic stress is believed to accelerate biologic aging and the aging process. Why not do yourself a big favor? Make yourself a priority and take some time off. Medically speaking, taking regular vacations is a very rewarding prescription!

**The bottom line is, taking time away from the stresses of work and daily life can improve our health, motivation, relationships, job performance, perspective and give us the break we need to return to our lives and jobs refreshed and better equipped to handle whatever comes!**

Sources:

Shannon Torberg, PsyD, LP: <https://www.allinahealth.org/HealthySetGo>

Dr. Leigh Vinocur: <https://www.takebackyourtime.org/why-vacations-matter>