

A Vacation Should Be A Time To Relax, Not Stress Out

from the American Counseling Association

Summer vacation is a time to rest, recharge and get away from the demands of work or school. At least, that's the theory.

Unfortunately, many summer vacations produce enough stress that people look forward to getting back to their work schedule in order to rest up from their "vacation."

Making a summer holiday truly relaxing isn't difficult. It simply requires making a few careful, sensible choices. It isn't about how much time you have off or where you go, but rather about what you do with that time and the choices you make to help you relax.

Trying to do too much is a common source of vacation stress. Experts suggest staying in fewer places for longer periods of time as one way to increase relaxation. They also advise against trying to pack in too many activities. It's fine to schedule, but every minute doesn't need to be filled. Plan some relaxing down time that's simply for you.

For a family get-away, reduce conflict and complaining by planning activities that will satisfy at least some of the needs of all family members. Help your children understand that there will be trade-offs. Some things on the vacation list will certainly be to keep them happy, but others will there to help keep mom and dad happy, too.

Being realistic about work obligations can also reduce vacation stress. If you find you can't just forget your work obligations, you're not going to relax.

So, instead of worrying or constantly calling the office, plan some specific work time. Schedule one afternoon for the family to disappear while you check with the office and clear up those nagging problems. Plan that time, get the work done, and then refocus on the vacation.

Vacation time can and should be restful and fun. If it's stressful instead, perhaps you're making it so. Do you worry about a vacation "schedule" or can you be spontaneous and take advantage of whatever looks like fun? Do you have a selection of activities from which to choose, or have you packed your schedule with sightseeing and activities that are likely to leave everyone tired, cranky and feeling overwhelmed?

Decide that your vacation time is going to be fun and relaxing, and then plan vacation choices to make that a reality. Keep it simple, under-scheduled, and flexible, and you just might come back refreshed and reinvigorated.

Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org

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