



UNITED
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Life Balance

Healthy matters to keep in mind.

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Take a Vacation from Stress With a Vacation from Work

According to a survey by the American Psychological Association, work is the number one cause of stress for Americans.¹ One way to take a vacation from that stress is literally to take a vacation.

It may seem almost unbelievable, but not all of us are doing that, even when we receive paid vacation days from our employer. In fact, according to a survey conducted by Expedia.com and Harris Interactive, one-third of employed adults in the U.S. usually don't take all the vacation days they receive each year.²

Stress at Work

Are you working so hard that it's affecting your physical health? According to the American Psychological Association³, three fourths of those who responded to a poll have physical symptoms from stress, including:

- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Stomach upset
- Irritability
- Anger
- Nervousness
- Loss of motivation

This type of stress can lead to long-term health problems, as well as smoking, alcohol abuse and overeating.

Picture a Stress-Relieving Vacation

Vacations can rejuvenate your mind, body and spirit. They can relieve stress and give your body a rest. They also give you the time to slow down, stop and smell the roses.

Close your eyes and imagine the perfect vacation. Maybe you're sitting on a beach by a palm tree, sinking your toes into the warm, white sand. Maybe you're seeing the sites in a city you've always longed to visit. Or perhaps you're sitting on your own front porch, drinking a glass of lemonade and reading a good book. The perfect vacation can be different for each of us! And what makes it perfect is that it's time off from work and an escape from the rat race.

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Slowing Down the Pace

You may want to take a day off here and there, or block out a whole week or two of vacation time. If you have kids, maybe you've been saving for years to take them to an amusement

Take a Break from Stress at Home Too!

Since you can't go on vacation all the time, it's important to take a break from stress while you're at home too. Here are some ideas:⁴

Get a good night's sleep.

Set a regular bedtime. Avoid beverages with caffeine starting six to eight hours before bed.

Eat a healthy diet.

You'll think more clearly, be in a better mood and feel less stressed.

Find the kind of exercise

you like. Start by exercising every other day for at least 30 minutes. Check with your doctor before you start.

Control stressful situations when you can.

One way is to avoid them. For example, if shopping with your spouse makes you feel stressed, then agree not to shop together.

SEAP

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Continued on **Page 2** »

park – and you finally have the funds. But if finances keep you from taking an expensive trip, there are still lots of fun ways to spend time together. Visit a water or wildlife park, have a backyard barbecue or go swimming in the nearest pool. If it's winter, try a day of sledding or skating.

The same is true for singles and couples. If you've saved enough for that cruise or island getaway, why not do it

now? If you're not traveling, treat yourself to dinner at your favorite restaurant or get fancy take-out for an elegant picnic. Go to a show or take a day trip to a nearby resort.

Taking a vacation from stress isn't always easy. But, you don't have to go it alone. OptumHealth Behavioral Solutions is here to help. Call or log on any time for help with any of life's challenges.



Six Rules for Relaxing

Set rules for yourself to make sure you truly unwind on your vacation.

- 1. Staying home? Promise yourself you'll avoid unnecessary housework while you're off.** If you're tripping over the laundry and can't find anything to wear, throw a load in the washer. But if there's dust on the coffee table, let it wait a week.
- 2. Turn off your cell phone and don't check your e-mail.** 83% of email users admit to checking their email daily while on vacation.⁴ Unless your job requires you to check in, let the voicemail take your calls and wait to check your e-mail. Enjoy the peaceful sound of your phone not ringing.
- 3. Get lots of activity.** Want to take a vacation from your regular exercise routine? Go ahead! Replace it with a more enjoyable activity. Walk through the zoo with your kids or go for a swim. If it's winter, plan a ski trip.
- 4. Avoid stress.** If you're staying home, try putting the dog in the kennel and sending the kids to a sleep-over. Spend your day doing whatever makes you happy – and enjoying the peace and quiet.
- 5. Try something new.** Have you always wanted to learn to play tennis, go rock climbing or spend a day being pampered at a spa? Give yourself a mental pick-me-up by doing something special you've never made time for.
- 6. Take care of yourself.** When you take that nap on the beach, do it without guilt. Just remember to stay in the shade. Keep yourself healthy by eating right, applying sunscreen and drinking plenty of fluids. Getting enough sleep is also important. Don't waste any vacation days by getting sick.

Resources

United Behavioral Health

www.liveandworkwell.com

Visit the Coping with Stress Life Stages Center.

Search for these articles and more: "Travelling Close to Home," "50 Stress-Busting Ideas for Your Well-Being"

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1 Don't Let Stress Ruin Your Labor Day Holiday <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/labor-day.aspx>, accessed November 16, 2011.

2 Expedia.com – 2009 International Vacation Deprivation™ Survey Results http://media.expedia.com/media/content/expus/graphics/promos/vacations/Expedia_International_Vacation_Deprivation_Survey_2009.pdf Accessed November 16, 2011.

3 American Psychological Association. Overwhelmed by workplace stress? You're not alone. <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/work-stress.aspx>. Accessed November 16, 2011.

4 The Patient Education Institute. "Managing Stress: Reference Summary" 2007. <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials/managingstress/hp069102.pdf>. Accessed August 24, 2010.