

How Not to Worry (or Think) About Work on Your Next Vacation

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This past spring, I took a trip to England. A dear friend of mine had moved to a port town on the coast of Kent, which was, thanks to a microclimate, unusually sunny. I had made a point of telling all my work contacts how badly I needed a true rest and asked them not to contact me during my time away. I didn't bring my computer but brought my phone, figuring I could check both email and social media on this smaller device.

I hadn't had a real vacation in five years and I was nervous. What if I missed something work wise that was really important? How could I hit a balance between resting and feeling connected? Answer: I couldn't. Or I should say, I didn't. Because within a few days of arriving in England, I realized that the rest I needed trumped everything else. It was only when I softened inside that I got my perspective back and realized that in fact, rest means rest.

Each day offered a new shedding of the daily responsibilities that I usually carry with me. At first, I would check email in the evenings. Within two days, I gave that up. I never checked social media even though I was convinced I was missing something very important in people's lives. The truth is, I wasn't missing a thing. And if I had put time falling into the tunnel of Facebook, what I really would have missed was the rest and sun and beauty that was all around me where I was.

Then I stopped carrying my purse, just slipping my wallet into my jacket pocket. Then, even better, I stopped bringing my wallet, and only carried a single credit card with me. The shedding of physical and psychological weight was tremendous. Everywhere we walked, I could really swing my arms. I felt light as a feather. I grew quieter, more relaxed and more peaceful with every passing day.

The trip was nine days of perfection which taught me a crucial lesson. I learned that I had fooled myself into believing that being busy, perpetually available and always "working hard" was the same as being productive. It isn't true. I also learned that there was very rarely anything happening on social media that was worthy of all

the time I was putting into it. So, the night I arrived home, I cancelled all my social media accounts and started to meditate. I gently grabbed back time that I had been pouring down the drain and re-routed it in a way that was totally beneficial to me. It is one of the best decisions I've made in years.

Here are some tips about how you too can seize this kind of opportunity for rest, reflection and fresh decisions while on vacation:

When you tell your boss and colleagues that you are going, make sure they understand that you will be truly gone. Unless there is a crucial work moment expected, make sure people understand not to contact you. The clearer you can be about this in advance, the freer you will feel on your break.

Make sure that your loved ones know your itinerary, so that they can reach you in the hotel or places you are staying. This will then free you up to leave your phone in a safe place that is away from you. Do not carry it on your person. If you are used to checking your phone continually, this might feel like a challenge at first. You will notice the pings and pulls of your habits as you wonder what could be happening, what you are missing but I assure you - you aren't missing anything. In fact, you are rediscovering the steady and relaxed person that you are when you are free from the tethers of technology.

Take a deep breath and realize that the office will actually keep humming while you are away. Don't let others tease and guilt trip you as you go. Harness the same self-discipline that you bring to your job each day, to keep you on track as you release and free yourself from your workday patterns. Vacations are an essential aspect of living a balanced life and in fact, balanced people are actually better at getting things done.

Hopefully this summer, you will be taking some time off. Really let it be off. Be assured that the more deeply and joyfully you take time to rest, the better and more balanced you will feel in all aspects of your work and home life. Go. And have a great time!

