



Make the most of the holidays

2 December 2019

Many years ago when I worked in corporate and professional service firms, a colleague on returning to work in January was asked how his holiday was. His reply was, “I need a holiday after that experience”. It turned out that his camping holiday with his wife was fraught with problems, and just about everything that could go wrong had gone wrong.

So how do you make the most of the holidays.

1. Leave work behind. Before you start your holidays finish off everything you need to do. If you have to stay late for the last few nights then do it. You cannot enjoy a holiday if you have to fit in some work during your holidays. If you are someone who absolutely has to check in each day (e.g. you are the CEO and you need to check for emergencies in your absence) then check your email and other messages (SMS, WhatsApp etc.) in the morning, do what needs to be done, and then enjoy the rest of the day. If you can though, rather set a clear out of office notice with the dates you will be away and the names of people who can be contacted in times of emergencies.
2. Know what you enjoy doing and what gets you to relax. And then do that. If you need to just relax and read plan to do that. If you get bored and restless easily then plan lots of fun and interesting things to do.
3. Being in a different environment is a change, and this kind of change can be good for you. So even if you are staying at home for the holidays plan some day outings to different places so you get to experience being in a different environment.
4. Consider learning a new skill. For instance, take up painting, or learn a language, or learn to play a musical instrument. If you have a bucket list, try one or two of the items.
5. Volunteer during your holidays. You don't have to spend all day, every day, helping others, but it can be very enjoyable to do some charity work during the holidays. You get to meet new people as well as feel good about yourself and do good.
6. If you need to spend time with people you don't particularly like, then set boundaries. You can say “no” to events, and you are not required to spend every minute of the holidays with people who really upset you. Stay away from conversations

that are bound to upset everyone. You don't have to partake in every argument or discussion.



7. Set a budget and keep to it. Nothing ruins a holiday more than worrying about debt. Don't overspend, overindulge or overschedule activities.
8. Don't spend your entire holiday doing chores. Yes, the wall may need painting, or you may need to do some DIY, however, if you spend your whole holiday doing that you are not going to have a holiday. You want to do some memorable things during your holiday.
9. Remind yourself that you need and deserve a holiday break. Your body and mind will not go on forever. A holiday is critical to keep you functioning at your best.
10. Be grateful. Think about the things that have gone well this year. List everything you can be grateful about.

Now, having just dispensed a whole lot of advice above, I am going to say please don't take the above too seriously. After all we are going into the silly season. We live in a world that is full of advice on how to do everything better. And we can become obsessed by that. We have to be great at our jobs, great parents, friends, etc. We spend our lives comparing ourselves with others to see how we shape up. During the holidays let that go. Don't compare your holidays to those of others. Don't "should" on yourself over the holidays. There are no "shoulds". Enjoy yourself. There is no one better holiday than another. This is not a competition to see who can outdo the next person. A holiday is the one time when you just do what you enjoy and take time out to relax and have fun.