



BalanceWorks[®] Newsletter

August 2009 | Written by the work/life experts at **eni**



Tips for a Less Stressful Vacation

The month of August is a high time for vacationing. Successful vacationing -- one that is enjoyed before, during, and after a trip -- takes a bit of planning. Otherwise, you may be setting yourself up to repeat scenarios that have made past vacations more stressful than they needed to be.

Road Transport Troubles

Almost everyone hits the road during vacation -- even folks who go to the airport, train station, or bus station. This can mean highly congested roads, particularly during summer weekends and holidays.

To make road travel more bearable:

- Figure out how to get there. Prepare directions to your destination in advance. Have maps and alternate travel routes handy in case you hit traffic. Satellite navigational devices can also be helpful, but make sure any gadget you use is easy to operate and read.
- Know what to expect. Check weather and traffic reports often as travel conditions can suddenly change. Look out for construction projects along your path. Often, the Department of Transportation in each area will list road closures or detours on their web site.

- Decide when to drive. Be aware of peak travel hours. You can generally expect roads to be packed after 5 p.m. on the Friday before a holiday, and between 6 p.m. and midnight on the Monday or Tuesday after a holiday. To avoid jam-packed highways, consider taking personal days to travel.

Sleep Starvation

In the rush to get trip-related errands, packing, and traveling done, many people stay up late and/or get up very early before a vacation, figuring they'll make up the sleep later on. However, it can take

one to three days to recover from a sleep deficit and to unwind from stress. Jet lag can also add to the problem. So can the "first night effect" -- a common phenomenon in which travelers find it difficult to snooze the first few nights in a different place.

To minimize sleep deprivation and its undesired effects:



For more information on ways to reduce stress during vacation, contact the work/life experts at BalanceWorks[®] by calling:

1.800.327.2255

eni's BalanceWorks[®] program is a confidential 24/7 service provided by your employer to help achieve work/life balance.



- Take the time to prepare for your trip. If you take a personal day off and think of it as part of your vacation, you have a better chance of going into your getaway more relaxed and coming out of it more rejuvenated. If you cannot take the time off, try preparing for your trip at least a week earlier than usual.

- Manage jet lag. Remember that your internal clock prefers to have a longer day rather than a shorter one. This is why it's generally harder to adjust to time change when you are traveling east as opposed to west. Anticipate the jet lag and schedule your vacation activities accordingly. Also make a special effort to get as much sleep as possible to reduce the effect of jet lag.

- Use caffeine wisely. Caffeinated beverages can help enhance your performance and mood if used in a strategic way. Keep in mind that you will need 100 milligrams to 200 milligrams of caffeine (the equivalent of a big cup of coffee or several soft drinks) to get the desired results. It takes the stimulant 15 to 30 minutes to take effect, and lasts three to four hours. Just make sure you don't drink it close to bedtime as it can ruin sleep.

Work Woes

Most people in today's day and age end up taking laptops, PDAs, cell phones, and other work items with them on the trip.

Instead of relaxing and enjoying a complete break from the stresses of the workplace, many stay constantly connected and consistently burdened with office communication and completing work.

There are a host of reasons why employees feel compelled to forgo a vacation or obsessively check in with work. Some may fear if they are gone and things go smoothly, it will send a message that they aren't needed. Others worry that business won't be conducted properly or key projects will fall apart.

Planning ahead, managing expectations and setting boundaries with your co-workers are key to making sure you get the break you need.

To minimize the stress of balancing work and vacation:

- Have an ongoing dialogue with your employer. Discuss how important it is for you to have dedicated time for work, and dedicated time off to rejuvenate. Such conversations can happen informally or in employee review sessions.

- Set boundaries while on vacation. If you have to take work with you, limit the amount of time you are online, on call, or laboring to one to two hours per day. Do not let work creep into every aspect of your leisure time.

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