

8 Ways to Unplug From Work During Your Summer Vacation

Don't get bogged down by your job while soaking up the sun

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For kids, the summer is a three-month marathon of playing outside, swimming with friends and trips to amusement parks. Reading textbooks and studying become foreign actions, and academic obligations of the future don't even come to mind.

While working adults don't have the luxury of a three-month vacation, they are afforded a week or more to escape the grinding pressures of their job. But instead of exploring the finer points of a travel destination, many cater to employer requests and client emails.

Noting the contrasts in mentality, David Posen, author of "Is Work Killing You? A Doctor's Prescription for Treating Workplace Stress," explains how the work-obsessed must tap into the carefree spirit of their youth to enjoy a summer getaway.



"Get in touch with the kid you used to be, who wouldn't think of taking anything work- or school-related with them on vacation. Just discover how to play and be with your family again," he says.

[Read: [Tips for Avoiding a Summer Vacation Disaster.](#)]

To avoid letting your workaholic tendencies spoil your vacation, follow these tips.

1. Avoid taking on major assignments before leaving. Generally, you have no problem spending spare time to complete a major assignment. But with a trip to Europe only 72 hours away, you need every extra minute to prepare. "Most people have difficulty getting everything organized before they leave anyway, [so] to add one more thing is almost unkind and unfair. And [it makes] the whole prep time harder," Posen says. Remind your boss you are going on vacation and that you won't be able to start working on a new project until you return, he suggests.

2. Don't let your employer intrude on your time. As a valuable asset to your company, you may receive many phone calls from a boss who's desperate for your expertise. Before departing, convey to him or her that "vacation time is vacation time," and you don't want to be bothered, says Stever Robbins, an executive business coach. If contacted to do work, relay that you'll consider it a workday and expect to be paid accordingly, Robbins says.

If you decline to do the work or don't answer messages, you shouldn't be worried about getting fired, Robbins adds. Depending on your company policy, employers may have a tough legal justification for firing you for not responding.

"My guess is if you said you took time off and [your employer] asked you to work when they gave you time off, that wouldn't be just cause for firing – absent something in the policy [that says] you take a vacation and you have to be available on call," says Matt Foley, an employment attorney for Flamm Walton, PC in Pennsylvania.

3. Lean on a co-worker. Before the plane has even lifted off, you're already fretting about a missed meeting or phone call at your desk. For relief, ask your boss to assign a capable colleague to handle your duties. "Make sure that somebody's been appointed or delegated ... to handle your responsibilities or calls that would have been made to you so that you don't have to worry," Posen says.

[Read: [How to Split Travel Costs With Friends.](#)]

4. Let family and/or friends hold you accountable. It won't take long before vacationers at your side grow weary and annoyed at the sight of you taking calls from your boss. Give license to your spouse or best friend to not only remind you about the purpose of the trip but to reprimand you as

well. Implement a penalty system in which you pay a fine between \$100 and \$1,000 each time he or she catches you working. "You only have to do it once," Robbins says, "and you will truly decide to stop working for the rest of the vacation."

5. Adjust settings on electronic devices. You've packed your carry-on with your laptop tablet and smartphone. All three serve as possible instruments to do work, so Robbins recommends turning off work email notifications for each one.

6. Be active during your vacation. Sitting idly in a hotel room surrounded by gadgets will only entice you to dive into assignments. Draft a trip itinerary filled with activities that will consume your days. Shopping, sightseeing and visiting museums makes the trip about "diversion, distraction, pleasure and enjoyment" – and not about work, Posen says.

7. Prioritize emails and cellphone use. If you're going to work, at least be selective in the tasks you choose. Robbins suggests checking your email and writing down on a piece of paper what action needs to be taken. If you can get away with not responding to the sending party, do so. Back-and-forth exchanges via email can engulf a good deal of time. "This will force you to get through the email and electronic stuff as quickly as possible," he says.

[See: [17 Signs You Might Be a Workaholic.](#)]

Also, put a cap on how long you work by leaving your smartphone or laptop charger behind during daily outings. A limited battery limits your use.

8. Banish all things electronic. If you're eager to conquer your addiction to work, and put family and friends first, taking a more radical route may be necessary. "If you're a true workaholic ... don't even take your electronics with you," Posen says.

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