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HEALTH TIPS: TAKE A VACATION, JUST GO
Published: June 22, 2007 at 5:29 PM E-mail Story | Print Preview | License
By ALEX CUKAN
UPI Health Correspondent
Take that vacation and take it easy

Surveys show more than one-third of Americans do not use all of their allotted vacation time -- but they should, says a U.S. expert.

"Taking a vacation helps rest your mind and body so that you are more flexible and you have a better perspective when you come back," says Jon Allen, a senior staff [psychologist](#) with The Menninger Clinic in Houston.

However, experts at The Menninger Clinic also realize vacations can also cause stress, and they suggest:

-- Allow time for departure and return. Build in some extra time for travel in vacation plans in case of glitches like a flight delay or snarled traffic.

-- Be prepared for cries of "I want!" from children. Explain to children beforehand that all spending money has been divided and put into a envelope for each child. When a child exclaims "I really, really want it!" take out his or her envelope.

-- Take time to unwind. Remember, the purpose of a vacation is to relax -- not to visit every museum and historical monument in the guidebook.

Benefits of leisure

No matter what form a summer break takes, the benefits of leisure time can be powerful. Leisure doesn't have to cost money or involve major consumption, according to Yoshi Iwasaki, professor of therapeutic recreation at Temple University in [Philadelphia](#).

"Focus on the quality of the experience instead of the actual activities," explains Iwasaki. "People value enjoyable and expressive activities in all cultures and if they can find meanings of life from these activities, the quality of life can be enhanced."

Iwasaki compared Western leisure to non-Western leisure and found that meaningful leisure contributed significantly to quality of life. Leisure activities include: dance, music, sewing, craft circles, storytelling, painting, spirituality, and humor as well as just having a safe place for a group to get together to talk, eat and take care of their children.

Iwasaki found that cross-culturally enjoyable and expressive activities provide:

- positive emotions and well-being.
- positive identities and self-esteem.
- social and cultural connections.
- enhanced learning and development as well as human strength and resilience.

Dealing with work while on vacation

Vacation-time is not always work-free. Twenty percent of workers say they plan to stay in touch with their workplace while on vacation, according to CareerBuilder.com's annual vacation survey. However, only 9 percent say their employers expect them to check-in.

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-- If a big project and a great vacation are planned for the same week, expect one of the two to give. Schedule time off before and after the big project.

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