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Are you suffering from Post Holiday Syndrome?

By Lisa Jewell  
Tuesday July 03 2007

If you’ve just got back from holidays and can’t settle into work again, you’re probably suffering from a case of the holiday blues. If it goes on for a few days, you may even have Post Holiday Syndrome.

Psychologists at the University of Granada in Spain have researched this condition, which they describe as a general feeling of discomfort on having to get back to work, with sufferers experiencing symptoms like tiredness, lack of appetite, muscle ache and anxiety.

But never fear — there are ways to get back into a routine and boost your spirits after your break.

Don't go straight back to work

It’s difficult to go from relaxing days by the pool straight into full-on meeting mode. Researchers at the University of Granada suggest building in a period of 're-adaptation' between holiday and work .

It is advice that’s shared by John Deely, an occupational psychologist with human resource experts Pinpoint.

“It's generally not a good idea to travel home from your holiday the day before you’re due back in work. Try to organise a buffer day.”

Work out what you have to do

No doubt you'll have an inbox crammed full of emails and have dozens of voicemails to return.

But don’t get overwhelmed by the work that’s built up in your absence. If you don’t manage it properly, you will run the risk of undoing all the relaxing effects of your holiday.

“I’d recommend spending half an hour planning out what you have to do before actually getting back into your work,” says Pinpoint’s John Deely.

And don't be shy about letting people know that you’re just back from a break and that you will respond to them in due course, in an organised fashion.

Keep up your exercise habit

Life coach Jackie Fitzpatrick says we should reflect on what we enjoyed about our holidays .

“One thing that often crops up is that we tend to go for lots of walks and we exercise more when we’re away.

“It’s important to incorporate that into our daily life when we get back. Exercise is important because of the endorphins it gives off, so make time for it.”

Have some `me time'

We look after ourselves better when we're on holidays— whether it's taking time to eat properly or to read a book we’ve had lined up for ages.

“On holidays, we usually sit down and eat food during the day,” says Jackie.

“People can keep this going when they’re back at work — take a lunch break away from your desk. The company has survived without you for two weeks so it can survive without you during your lunch hour.”

Book your next break

Having another holiday to look forward to can ease the effects of Post Holiday Syndrome.

“If you know that you’re going away in a few weeks’ time it can help keep you motivated,” says John Deely.

Recharge your batteries by switching off from work

One reason why people don’t feel like they’ve had a decent break is that they haven’t actually taken a break!

Think back to your holiday did you check your emails every few hours and find it hard to turn off your mobile phone?

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“Companies give people BlackBerries and then their employees feel obliged to keep them on while they’re on holidays,” says Deely.

“There has to be a work-life balance and holidays should be ‘down time’ to relax and unwind,” he adds.

**Change your holiday pattern**

Researchers advise taking a few shorter holidays rather than a single long one, as this will ease the re-adjustment to work life.

Ideally, you should avoid booking three to four weeks off work in one go.

Instead, it is recommended that you book a couple of separate holidays and spread out breaks during the year.

**Cut back on your TV viewing**

You've survived for a couple of weeks without the soaps or sport on the box. No doubt you've been more sociable and re-acquainted yourself with the joys of conversation!

Monitor your intake of TV now that you're home again and try to become more like continental Europeans — go out in the evening and talk to friends or neighbours.

**Re-evaluate your priorities**

Some people like to veg out while on holidays but others take time to figure out what they’re doing in life and what makes them happy. If you’re one of the latter, getting back from a break may bring all these issues into focus.

“If you're coming back to something you really love, you won't have the holiday blues,” says Jackie Fitzpatrick.

“However, if you have these negative feelings for a few days, then you should pay attention to them. Often they are a prompt for change in your life.”

**Keep the holiday groove going**



Recognise that you’re feeling a little low after your holiday and see if you can bring back a little of the magic.

There are so many cuisines now available in Ireland that you can recreate the food— try a tapas bar, a Greek restaurant or even go for an American burger and fries night out.

Why not even Salsa the night away or see a foreign language film that reminds you of your hols!

- *Lisa Jewell*

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