

You Deserve a Break!

Everyone needs a break, yet many people leave their vacation time unused or work through their lunch.

When you take a break, you're not dodging your responsibilities. You're taking care of yourself so you'll have the stamina to be your best you as a worker, parent, friend, partner or whatever other roles you play in your life. Whether it's taking a day off or using your lunch break, finding some time for a break will help you feel more refreshed and restored.

Risks of chronic stress

Please repeat to yourself “stress is not a badge of honour.” Although it can be hard to balance competing priorities, your mental and physical health need attention and rest.

The body is designed to respond to short bursts of stress. When stress is prolonged and the stress response is triggered repeatedly and regularly, as can happen throughout a stressful or busy day, the situation turns into one of chronic stress and health problems can set in.

Chronic stress may make you more susceptible to conditions ranging from frequent headaches and gastrointestinal issues to high blood pressure, which brings an increased risk of heart disease and stroke. When your “allostatic load” or overall level of stress accumulates to a certain level, then stress can snowball because you're constantly in a state of reactivity.

Finding a balance and time to recharge your batteries will help manage and prevent chronic stress.

Failure to Lunch

How many times have you caught yourself scarfing down a sandwich in front of your computer screen or skipping lunch altogether? Although these options may seem like a logical choice on busy days at work, have you ever stopped to ask yourself: is this the best use of my time?

It might not be. The reason is that breaks are an important part of the workday. This may sound counter-intuitive, but part of working hard is knowing when it's time to step away momentarily. And yes, you still need to take breaks while working from home. Taking work breaks leaves us feeling mentally and physically refreshed, which helps avoiding potential burnout.

If you find yourself experiencing “failure of lunch” by skipping or working through your break don't worry, you're not the only one. Data shows that only one in five office workers take an actual lunch break away from their desks.

So, what can you do to make sure you're stepping away for a break? Here are some ideas:

- **Build it into your schedule.** Scheduling breaks into your calendar will remind you to get up and step away. It will also help to ensure that a break is accounted for when planning out the rest of your day.
- **Ask someone to join you.** If you feel like you can't keep yourself accountable for taking a real lunch hour, build it into your schedule by pairing it with a deliberate action, such as asking a co-worker, friend or family member to join you at a certain time.
- **Join a group.** Is there a group of your co-workers who regularly meet up for lunch together? It might feel intimidating to ask to join in, but doing so is the most direct way to get a foot in the door and to establish new friendships. A simple ask to a group member is usually all it takes. You might say, "Would you mind if I joined you guys for lunch today? I've not been good about taking a real lunch lately, but I'm trying to be better about it."
- **Spending it doing something just for you.** How often do you get the chance to do something just for yourself? Take advantage of your lunch break by spending time practicing some self-care. Bring a book to read, go for a walk, call a friend, journal, meditate, or stretch – anything that will help you disconnect and relax.

Out of office

Earlier this year we shared an article about the importance of taking your [vacation days](#).

Well, did you take some time off? It's October! If you haven't booked your time off what are you waiting for? Don't let time slip by – it's important to take a break from the job, routine, and demands of life in order to keep stress levels in check.

Many people feel taking a break adds too much work in preparing to be away and then making up for the missed time. However, while it may take some effort, the health and well-being benefits you'll gain more than make up for those costs.

Everyone needs a break from time to time in order to relieve stress. So, whether it's a big vacation, a staycation, or a short break take the valuable time away to feel restored and refreshed.