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Are your holidays recharging you? If not, what's wrong?

EXPERT ADVICE ON HOW TO MAKE MOST OF YOUR BREAK

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As the holiday season peaks, we would do well to ask ourselves if it's serving its purpose. More often than not, warns a mental health specialist, we tend to forget why we take a break in the first place, packing our schedules with so much to do that the holiday defeats its very purpose.



"Holidays are a trigger for relaxation and enjoyment. The thought alone can activate our parasympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for that 'rest and digest' state, basically the opposite of fight or flight," explains Anna White, director of Corporate and Workplace Services & Mental Health First Aid UAE.

"Our brains are wired to make associations, so when we think about holidays, we often picture things we love such as free time, family, good food, or adventure."

Holiday stress

But what happens many times is just the opposite, with the stress of travel and making last-minute arrangements becoming overwhelming.

To avoid this, she recommends easing into holiday mode before it begins

"If you're running around packing last-minute or scrambling to tie up loose ends at work, you'll likely need a few days to unwind once the holiday starts. Delegate responsibilities, plan ahead, and try to finish work tasks a day or two early," says White.

"Think of it as entering

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Anna White | Mental health expert

'holiday mode' gradually, rather than flipping a switch when you get on the plane. That way, you're ready to relax the moment your break begins."

Carrying work on a holiday

Another dilemma that confronts most holidayers is whether they should carry their work laptops and phones during the break.

White says it depends on the person. "The key is balance — set clear boundaries for when and how you'll check in."

Post-holiday blues

Whether or not you are recharged after your holiday, post-holiday blues invariably set in as the return to routine
often feels like a stark contrast to the freedom and relaxation of the holiday, she says. Shifting your mindset can ease the adjustment.

While ideal holidays are fantastic, White says it's important to remember they're not the only time we should allow ourselves to rest or recharge.

"If we're always living for the next holiday, we risk losing out on joy in our everyday lives. Find ways to create 'mini-holidays' in your daily routine whether it's a quiet morning coffee, an hour of reading, or a walk in nature. True happiness comes from finding balance, not just waiting for the next big getaway," she concludes.