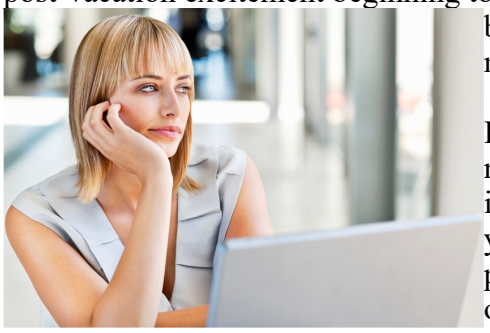
Back to work blues: easing into work after summer vacation

It's Sunday afternoon. You've just had a wonderful, two-week holiday, relaxing and doing everything you wanted to do. But as the afternoon progresses a feeling of anxiety slowly sets in. You can already feel your post-vacation excitement beginning to fade as you anticipate the madness you know tomorrow is going to bring. Say goodbye to relaxation and sunshine, and hello to a full voice-mail box and an endless list of tasks to tackle.



If this is how you feel when you return to work after a vacation, you're not alone. For many, the transition from vacation to the working world is often filled with anxiety and disorientation. This is especially true if your work days are very demanding and your work environment is fast-paced, the standard for most people these days. But there are a number of ways to make the transition from your relaxing vacation back to work a little less jarring:

Get organized before you go. Before taking your vacation, make a list of tasks to complete and tick everything off as you get it finished. Having that visual will help you leave feeling like everything has been taken care of. Also, knowing that you've left everything in order will ease anxiety when it's time to go back, keeping your mind off of unfinished work and your focus on total relaxation.

Ease back into it. Be mindful of how you schedule your first few days back. Don't try to tackle everything you missed while you were gone all at once and if possible don't plan any big meetings or set any major deadlines. Just try to get through the tasks at hand, talk to your co-workers to find out what you missed and then progressively go through your priorities. Work thoughtfully and by the end of the week, you'll feel caught up and less stressed.

Post vacation reminders. If you travelled during your vacation, bring something back that you can put at your workstation. A photograph, picture frame or ornament can help create a more harmonious work environment by giving you something to look at when you're feeling stressed and bring you back to a calmer state of mind. It creates a harmonious work environment and has been shown to relieve work pressure. But, make sure your souvenir is appropriate for the office. Not everybody wants to see the wild pictures from your Miami vacation!

Focus on the positive. Thinking about the friends you have and other reasons you enjoy your job will help make coming back to work a breeze. Studies show your mental health and state of mind can have a significant effect on your work life. Those who have a positive and optimistic attitude deal with fewer work-related problems, are more energetic and generally feel more peaceful and calm.

Challenge yourself. Try scheduling a seminar or class for when you return. It will help to give you a sense of purpose, and once completed, a sense of personal satisfaction and growth, making work feel more rewarding.

Schedule your next vacation. While it may seem far away, research shows that having your next vacation planned before you get back to work can give you something to look forward to. It helps you feel better about being back at work and if you're planning on taking a trip, it may motivate you to start saving for that next relaxing and exciting vacation getaway.

People experience back to work blues no matter how long or short their time away—even just after a weekend! If these feelings of anxiety or apprehension don't go away or worsen, it could be a sign of a more serious problem—one you shouldn't ignore. Take time to explore why you might be feeling like this about your return to work. It may be helpful to speak with a manager, supervisor or even a professional for additional support and resources that can help you pinpoint the root of the matter. For most though, a little time, planning and a few positive steps can help you reflect on the highlights of your last vacation without losing sight of all the great things you're involved in here and now.