

How to keep that holiday feeling for longer

Robyn Pearce

Here are some practical steps to help you sustain your holiday *joie de vivre* past the first few weeks back at work after a holiday.

Step 1: Lock in 'time out' – every week

Recharge and personal time is too important to leave to chance – it needs to be planned for. If you consistently plan your week rather than just your day it's far easier to schedule 'me' time. Most people use their diary as an appointment taker and if there's a gap, other things are squeezed in. I encourage you to flip that behaviour. Instead, turn your diary into a planning tool. Download my free ebook '*How to Master Time in 90 Seconds*' at www.gettingagrip.com for a quick overview of how to plan and prioritise in such a way that *you* are included in the schedule.

Step 2: 'Me' time is NOT selfish!

If you've ever thought that giving yourself time out is selfish – **GET OVER IT!** In fact it's a caring thing to do, for others as well as yourself. If you're burnt out and exhausted, who's going to do your job and keep your home fires burning brightly?

Step 3: Get the right language around the issue

Don't say 'I can't fit it in'. Instead ask 'How can I fit it in?' The quality of the question determines the quality of the answer.

Step 4: Even a few minutes a day makes a difference

Ask yourself: 'If I give myself 30 minutes a day to do anything I like, what would I do and when and where would I do it?' Just the very idea of regular 'me' time is energising and exciting (and for some it's so uncommon that at first it's scary!) If you're in a family or partnership, you can support each other to have this space.

Step 5: Separate home and business

This is one of the hardest issues for us, and even more challenging if family members also work in the education sector too, or even at the same school. Trouble is, keeping going becomes a habit. Decide on an action that says 'we're done for the day'. It might be turning off the computer, shutting the home office door or a humorous penalty system (like a Fines Jar) if work is



discussed after a set time. The list below includes a couple of other techniques.

Some daily 'chill out' strategies

- Drive home by a lovely setting and take 10 minutes to walk in the fresh air
- At the beginning of the day get up 30 minutes earlier than the family and use that as your quiet time
- Change your clothes and take a shower as soon as you walk in from work – cast off the day's events by casting off the clothes
- Instead of turning on the TV with its attendant crop of noise and disasters, put on some quiet relaxing music
- Get into a regular exercise programme. If you don't like exercising alone, find a support group or start one
- Have a regular time to stop. Many people have a ritual 'before-dinner' drink where they sit down and relax. If possible, avoid having such a break with the 6 o'clock news – instead of relaxing you're bringing in the world. No 'me time' there – just gloom and doom! If anything really dramatic happens someone will tell you!
- Don't do email after a certain time at night, say 7 or 8pm. I know many teachers feel they have to work into the evening in order to keep up with the workload, but if you don't set a regular switch-off time you'll go to bed with

work issues still rolling round your brain. That then affects the quality of your sleep.

Everyone needs *regular* time out. Don't wait until the next holiday to recharge. Make it a consistent daily and weekly habit and you'll be far more effective and productive when you *are* at school. Burn-out happens when we ignore these simple strategies; then you're no use to yourself, your family, your students or your colleagues.

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Robyn Pearce is known around the world as the Time Queen, helping people discover new angles on time. She travels regularly to Australia from her home

in New Zealand to work with schools on Professional Development days and also conferences.

To help time-poor parents, check out Robyn's new book *Getting a Grip On Parenting Time: 86 Commonsense Lessons from the Trenches*. Check the sample at www.gettingagrip.com/parentingtime/ As well as being a time and productivity specialist for the last 25 years she's also the mother of six and grandmother of 17, so there have been many 'lesson' opportunities!