

10 Suggestions to Ensure You Vacation Well

I'm not known for my rest and relaxation skills.

After a fun weekend of hanging out together, a friend said, "Renee, you should have a warning sticker on you that says, 'Warning: Highly Active Person.'"

My idea of a great vacation is more along the lines of how many miles we can canoe or hike than it is how much lying on the beach we can do.

I have never been accused of being a slacker. I have fairly been accused of being driven. You get the picture. I tend to work hard and play hard.

I don't think I'm the only one. I've observed that leader and ministry types, in particular, can find vacationing well particularly difficult.

Slowly, but surely, over the last 10 years, God's been teaching me what it means to rest and Sabbath well, including vacationing!

I wrote a thesis on a theology of play. Yes, I get the irony of writing a 170-page thesis on play. Yet, it was what I needed to convince my brain of how good, important and holy play and vacation are in our lives.

It has taken longer for the practices to work their way into my heart and life.

Play and vacation may look different for all of us, but we need it. It is good and it is holy. God invites us to delight in all that is good, which includes times of retreat and rest.

Here are some suggestions on how to vacation well:

1. Hand off responsibilities.

As much as possible, make a plan for things to be covered at work while you are away. It takes effort to make this plan, but it'll give you greater peace of mind while you are away and make it easier when you come back.

2. Get away from technology.

Being plugged in all the time keeps us alert and "on." It is too easy to notice something going on at work that we think we need to respond to quickly. Lose the phone, email and even watch.

I really enjoy losing my watch on vacation and going by the schedule of those around me or by when my body tells me I'm hungry or tired. Consider whether you need to lose Netflix and social media for vacation, too.

3. Give time for decompression.

I've noticed it takes me a few days to unwind and get in vacation mode. Those first two to three days of vacation are essential in setting the tone for vacation and helping me unplug.

I've found I have to be busy those first few days doing something active (for example, hiking) or odd jobs (different than my work jobs, such as work on the house or yard and so on). If I just do nothing in the first few days, I go crazy and conclude vacation is not for me.

4. Give time for re-entry.

It can feel like hitting a brick wall when I come back after vacation. I'm learning to give myself grace and a few days to get back in the swing of things.

On your email-and-phone vacation replies, say you'll be returning messages starting a couple days after you return from vacation to take the pressure off yourself. Try to leave the first few days back at work meeting-free to give yourself time to get back up to speed and your head around work again.

5. Do something different.

Use vacation to get up to different activities than you usually do. For me, that means getting away from a desk and getting outside in creation and around family and friends.

If you build houses for your work, it is not a vacation to work on your own house. Give your body and mind a break and do something different.

6. Get around people that refuel you.

Spend time with those you care about and bring you life. Catch up with an old friend. Plan a meal, hike or visit with people you've wanted to connect with more. Spend time with that person who makes you feel encouraged and heard.

7. Celebrate and enjoy the good around you.

Enjoy the simplest of gifts from God - good food, fun music, play sports that give you joy, read things that refresh your soul, enjoy deep conversations, laugh.

8. Change up your spiritual disciplines during vacation.

Usually I'm a faithful journaler and Bible reader. During vacation, I change it up.

Try:

- Listening to new worship music.
- Checking out a different church near where you are vacationing.
- Going through the alphabet and naming all the things you are thankful for that start with each letter of the alphabet (involve those in the car, on the hike or around the table with you).
- Listening to a new podcast.
- Read a version of the Bible you usually don't.
- Get yourself to a spot in creation that reminds you how great and good God is.


9. Linger.

Slow down. One of the great things about vacation is freedom from our usual schedules.

During vacation, I enjoy lingering longer with a cup of tea at the dinner table, lingering after I get back from a run to chat to the neighbors, lingering on a walk to smell the roses, lingering at the farmers market to take it all in and try some new foods.

10. Sleep.

Rest up. Turn off the alarm, take naps, go to bed early. Sleep and rest will restore you.

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