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NEXT STEP

The great escape

Why you should take a vacation even when you can't

There are people amongst us who literally fear the idea of taking a real vacation. They would rather keep working on and on and on. Your atypical workaholic finds a certain delight in working himself like a dog, over several months and sometimes even years. Needless to say there is a flip side of this coin. Maybe you worry you'll fall off the wagon and out of line from all your responsibilities. Maybe you just feel better keeping busy. We're all acquainted the hackneyed proverb, 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.' But this is actually what happens to those amongst us who don't take time off to rest and take a much needed breather.

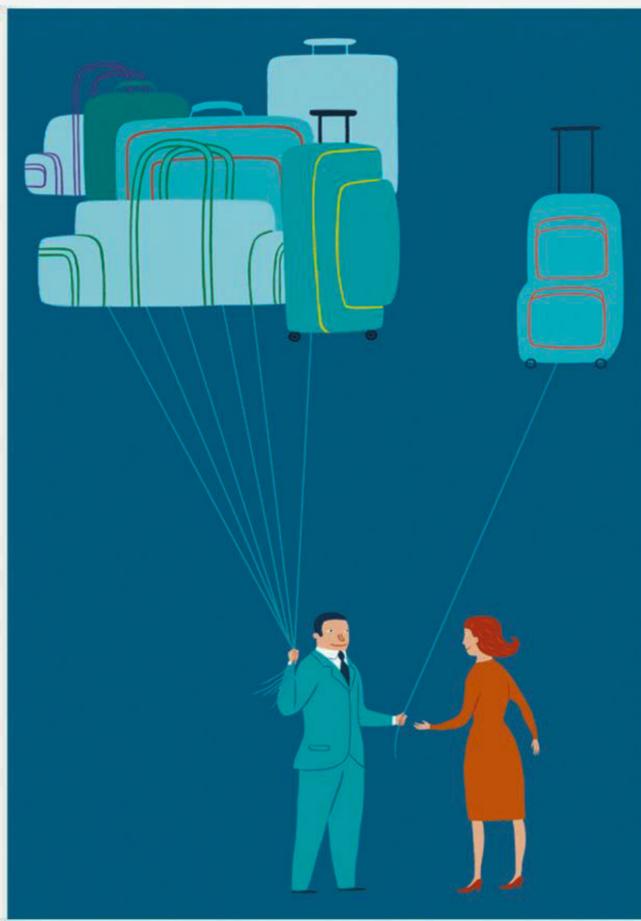
Now, yes we do take some time off for a couple of days. But that can hardly be called a vacation. The idea of a vacation is to take off from everything, abandoning almost every thought of work and pressure, and to rest your soul for at least a week (or more). So, don't wait to have "enough" money or time. It will benefit you if you really haven't taken a vacation for quite some time now.

Let's take a look at the risks of burnouts. When someone is overly disillusioned with a job or career or anything that they are doing passionately, they are prone to experience burnouts. Too much of something is not always good. This is what happens when we put excess stress on ourselves. According to the

Framingham Heart Study conducted in 1948, both men and women who took vacations twice a year were eight times less prone to a cardiovascular disease than those who took irregular vacations. Men who did not go for a vacation once a year, had a 21% risk of death from all causes and 32% greater risk of dying from a heart attack.

Have you noticed that you do not have the same patience to relax and read a novel, reclining on your bedpost, as you used to in high school? Have you felt you don't care about your friends or family as much as you thought you would once you grew up? In the present day, we are all getting dragged down in the race for efficiency sponsored by this so called shiny corporate new world, which compensates us on the basis of our productivity. It's ultimately sucking the humanity out of us, slowly but surely, under the guise of working up the career ladder. But what's the use in blaming the rest of the world? Hold yourself accountable. It is you who passes your free time absorbed in your smartphone instead of taking some time out for yourself and your friends. And no, the occasional junk food party doesn't suffice.

Ovick Alam, co-founder and CEO of Webable says, "I work in digital media marketing - It's round the clock (no weekends), intriguing and meticulous work. At the same time, it's exhausting and extremely



stressful to dig data, align creative strategies with them, design at scale and optimize a campaign. This burns me out every 3-4 months. Ideas stop coming, energy and enthusiasm drops and you feel unproductive!" When asked what he does to get back in form he replied, "I go for a vacation, however small or long, which brings me bliss! It increases my productivity, brings in new perspectives and rekindles my spirit."

The heart and the brain are the two organs of your body which work continuously from the day you were born till the day you die. It is true they can work restlessly, but that does not mean they should. A vacation is a great way to be kind to your body and take the daily pressure off from your heart and your brain. Our mind and body both need rest to stay fit and vigorous. Vacation will give your soul the space it needs to rejuvenate and liberate itself. Embark on a journey someplace beautiful, away from home, away from work and all the dozen electronic devices you think your life relies on. Recharge your battery - the time off will refresh your mind and revitalize your body for another high-pressure round of work, family and responsibility.

Jurshad Rawmy is a Bangladeshi Student Studying BBA in APU, Japan. In regards of tiring work he

says, "Once my scholarship was suspended and I had to pay 6.5 lakhs on my own in four months. I didn't wanted to break it to my parents, so I took up three part-time jobs instead and pushed myself really hard those four months. I managed to pull it off but the result was that I had completely maxed out. I usually work throughout the summer holidays but last year, I decided to head back home for a vacation. I had to struggle with the financing, but it was absolutely brilliant and it ended up refreshing me for an entire year of challenges ahead."

We fear that if we take a break long enough from our work or business, it will slow us down and we will waste more time to get back on track. While that might be true in some cases, doing the same task over and over again, will bore your brain, and take a toll on your efficiency. We need to give our mind the scope to think out of the box and open itself to the world around. We do not feel confident to get away from our routine work for long, but it also gives you something that you cannot get from short breaks or continuous work - a fresh perspective to plan for the future. In the end, it's your life; don't use it all up without a little fun. So, plan your getaway today, and break out of this vicious cycle.

HASIBUL ISLAM

Breeze it, buzz it, easy does it

Avoiding going over the top, play it cool this Eid season

If you're a chronic night owl and a serial over-sleeper like me, the upcoming vacations seem like the perfect opportunity to clock in some extra (read: excess) z's. As for the white collars and nine-to-fivers of the world, it's time to swap your oxfords and ties for something more comfortable. Whoever you are, it's easy to forget everything you've learnt about control the past month and slip into a coma of binge-eating and mindless self-indulgence. So before it's too late and your mind and body start to fail you, try to take an active stance against your inner sloth and inner glutton.

Beat the pre-holiday slump
Once it's officially Eid holiday, there's no turning back. It's here, and even though you wish you'd bought the perfunctory greetings card for your extended family, or made a reservation at that fancy overpriced restaurant you're taking your family out to, it's probably too late. The greetings cards are going to arrive too late, and the restaurant's going to be full when you get there (they won't even let you put your foot in). Unless you're the type that'd rather be riddled with self-hate, don't get too comfy before it's actually show-time. Offices and schools slow down right before the holidays and your hedonistic brain will fool you into thinking it's okay to abandon all worldly responsibility already. Instead, use this time as buffering period. Ease into the holiday with some simple last minute preparations, which you'll thank yourself for once the celebrations are in full swing.

If you're a scatterbrain, sit down and make a list of pre-holiday to-do's. Do you have to hand in your leave application? Are there bus tickets you need to book? Have you really finished your Eid shopping (and that includes the sweets and the groceries)? Sit down with the rest of the family and make some plans - you'd hate it to be called irresponsible the rest of the year for forgetting the dinner party at your great aunt's place. And do yourself a favor and shop for presents online. You'll save yourself a truckload of time and avoid the holiday rush in all the big shopping malls.

If there's any last minute office



work you need to hand in, get to it right now. Personal experience will tell you that you end up muting deadlines in your head in the face of imminent freedom. If you get back to office first thing after Eid, you might like to get some things done in advance. It won't seem as grueling doing it now as doing it at 3am in the morning before office resumes, or not doing it at all and getting a earful from your boss and making things a whole lot harder for yourself in general.

Don't be a misanthrope and talk yourself into avoiding holiday pleasantries - they're not pointless even if you think so, the cynic that you are. Delight your boss and colleagues with greetings cards or little presents - beats typing up endless trite text messages two days after Eid because you can't think something

nice to say. You might be too lazy to do that anyway once you've had too much biriyani and firni, so do it now before you break some hearts.

You're on vacation, not off the grid

Sure you've been waiting for this forever, and really really deserve more than 5 hours of sleep, but try to stick to somewhat of a schedule in the holidays. Waking up at the same time you would during rest of the year isn't that hard if you're going to bed at midnight or earlier. Vacation doesn't mean late nights - do you really want to be more tired than when you left the office? And when you wake up at one o'clock in the afternoon the next day, you're probably going to start reconsidering your life choices. It's only natural for any sleep-deprived human being to misjudge the importance of catching up with

friends and family, so don't put yourself in that position in the first place. Get enough sleep, but don't forget your old acquaintance the alarm clock so soon.

Holidays are actually the only time of year you get to work on your bad habits. So if you've got an "insomnia" problem or have really bad mornings that even coffee won't solve, you get to take as much time as you need and do something about it. Lucky you!

Also, think of all the time you're going to save if you wake up in the morning instead of the afternoon - enough time to network all throughout the Eid season. Don't skip out on the holiday parties, and check in on colleagues and business contacts. That handwritten card you thought was a bit silly could go a long way. "But I'm on break" is not good enough a reason to isolate yourself from everyone else, especially if you're spending Eid inside the city. Just think of the really great excuse you're going to have to come up with once you're back to work and everyone's asking why you didn't drop by even once in the ten days you got off.

The inevitable

Even after you've taken all the precautions you could possibly imagine and kept all the promises you made to yourself, you know something's going to go wrong. That something is probably you're going to overeat or get overwhelmed by all the invitations you've received. Say "No", to yourself and to those around you - let them down easy, but you're not obligated to make it to every single dinner party, now are you? If there's too much cooking planned, cheat. Get take out.

In the spirit of moderation and self-control, choose variety over quantity. Believe it or not, you'd rather have enough space in your stomach for five different things your mum spent forever making than one over-stacked plate of really good polau. So this holiday season, don't give into your vices - you know better. Not only will you find it easier to get back to your over-performing usual self, but you're going to be one self-satisfied smug fella at the end of it all.

AMIYA HALDER

ECOSOC Youth Forum

#Youth2015: Realizing the future they want

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations organized "#Youth2015: Realizing the future they want" on 2nd and 3rd June 2014 at the UN Headquarters in New York. After a competitive selection process, two Bangladeshis, Kashfia Nehrin and I, Nabeera Rahman were selected to attend the prestigious Youth Forum.

The forum featured five working sessions. The opening session of the ECOSOC Youth Forum #Youth2015 started with a performance by Lisa Russell Spoken Word's Artists.

Session one was titled "Youth employment: Creating decent jobs for a more sustainable future." Session two focused on reports from global and regional Youth Forums, and presented regional youth forums in Latin America and the Arab region.

In session three, "Advancing progress in Africa beyond 2015:



a youth perspective", speakers discussed various challenges that are barriers to progress faced by the African nations.

After session four, "The youth: The future they want beyond 2015", there was an additional side event titled "The future we want for us - young peoples' vision for the post-2015 agenda." I discussed how the challenges faced by Nepal in the areas of quality education and opportunities for youth are very similar to the scenario in Bangladesh.

The final session was on "Youth: The future they want beyond 2015 - continued." There were responses from the floor where more than 60 representatives from all over the world commented on the resolution presented, and shared their commitment for taking it further at regional and national levels.

After my experience at this amazing Youth Forum, I would like to say that Bangladesh could also take the leadership to organize and host a regional Youth Summit in Bangladesh, inviting youth representatives from all the SAARC countries to share their youth empowerment initiatives.

NABEERA RAHMAN