

## ASK THE EXPERTS

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### MINDSET AND MENTAL HEALTH

*It feels like the time I take away from work makes me feel more stressed when I return. How can I leverage my breaks and time off more effectively so that I can rejuvenate and return to work with more energy and a fresh perspective?*

Feeling more stressed upon returning to work after a break is not uncommon. Here are some strategies to help you leverage your breaks and time off more effectively.

#### BEFORE YOUR BREAK

- **Plan Ahead:** Before taking time off, wrap up loose ends at work. Delegate tasks, set out-of-office messages, and provide colleagues with information they might need during your absence. Planning helps minimize the pile-up of tasks upon your return.
- **Set Boundaries:** Make it clear to colleagues and clients that you will be unavailable during your time off. Setting these boundaries helps reduce the likelihood of work intrusions during your break.

#### DURING YOUR BREAK

- **Digital Detox:** Limit your access to work emails and messages. Constant connectivity prevents you from fully disengaging from work stressors. A digital detox can help your mind truly rest and reset.
- **Engage in Activities that Refresh You:** Focus on activities that rejuvenate you or help you decompress, whether it's spending time with loved ones, pursuing hobbies, exercising, or simply resting. Activities that bring joy can significantly boost your mental and physical well-being.
- **Mindfulness and Relaxation:** Practice mindfulness, meditation, or yoga, which can help reduce stress and increase feelings of calm and well-being.
- **Schedule Fun and Rest:** Even if you intend to travel, plan for both fun activities and rest. Sometimes, the most rejuvenating breaks are those with a good balance of adventure and relaxation.

#### AFTER YOUR BREAK

- **Ease Back into Work:** Try to plan a lighter schedule for your first few days back. This can help you adjust to your re-entry more smoothly and catch up on phone calls and emails without feeling overwhelmed.
- **Incorporate Breaks into Your Routine:** Short, regular breaks can also help prevent burnout. Even during busy periods, try to take short breaks to step away from your work, stretch, or do a quick meditation.
- **Reflect on Your Break:** Take some time to think about what you enjoyed most during your time off and why. Knowing which activities rejuvenated you can help you plan more effective breaks in the future. Remember, taking effective breaks is not just about the absence of work, but also about engaging in activities that replenish your mental, emotional, and physical energy.

#### RESOURCES

[Headspace](#) or [Calm](#): Apps for meditation and mindfulness.

[Trello](#) or [Asana](#): Project management tools that help organize and delegate tasks.

[Meetup](#): Local groups or activities that match interests, a way to engage in new experiences, or find hobbies.

[Insight Timer](#): A free app offering guided meditations and talks by mindfulness experts.

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