



Vacation: Redefining "Vacation" Whether Away...or Right at Home! by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

We cover all sorts of stress-related topics here, from coping with workplace stress, depression, TMJ, and anxiety... to meditation, boosting endorphins, enhancing sleep, and bringing more laughter into our lives. One fairly universal stress-factor these days seems to be longer workdays and broader responsibilities, with a shortage of recreation. Most folks don't enjoy enough sheer, simple pleasure. We need to get creative and explore some new ways to relieve stress -- even when free time is limited!

Oh, how we all long to "vacate" our day-to-day stress and responsibilities, to fly off to sun-drenched beaches or snow-capped peaks, to go white-water-rafting or to golf camp or cruising The Galapagos. Unfortunately, most of us generally have to wait awhile until vacation rolls around, and even then find it nearly impossible to truly "vacate," absent cell phones, laptops, faxes, etc. Then when the fun's done, we often return to the frustrations we left. (*Only now there's a pile of mail, and another of laundry!*)

Who needs vacation? You do. (Not news, I realize.)

Why? Health depends upon balance. (OK. You knew that too.)

When? Now it gets interesting...

5 Pre-Vacation Tips to Reduce "Homecoming Stress:"

According to Webster, vA-'kA-sh&n is: "Respite from something, exemption from work, an act of vacating." Nowhere does Webster mention flight delays, blackout periods, childcare or wads of cash. Planning and taking a vacation are not without their own inherent stressors.

1. Pre-Pay Your Credit Card Bill: What a thrill to return from spending money, and find a "0" balance!
2. Plan Ahead: Arrange for enough food and clean clothes for 1-2 days after your return. (Make your bed! You'll be really glad you did.)
3. Try This Sample Stress-Buster Phone/Email Autoreply Message: *"I'm out of the office enjoying my long-awaited vacation. In a true emergency that absolutely cannot wait until my return, leave a voice message and someone will return your call. Otherwise, I wish you a vacation soon too, thanks for understanding, and I'll look forward to talking with you after July 8th."* Arrange for someone to retrieve/reply.

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4. To Take Your Laptop? Not?: Both make sense, depending upon personal style and current projects. Person A says, *"I check email once daily, quickly reply, and avoid pile-ups."* Person B prefers, *"No laptops, cell-phones or voicemail. It can all wait."*

5. Re-Enter Gently: Nothing dampens a vacation mood faster than to hit the ground running on four hours' sleep. Plan "cushion time" to unpack, ease-in, process mail, get to the gym. Be sure to schedule something fun for that first week home.

No Trip On The Horizon? Bloom Where You're Planted!

Ask yourself, "What is it that needs "vacating?" Is it your work? Your kids? A messy house?"

Now, let's redefine Vacation:

One winter I was inundated with deadlines and "to-do's." With no vacation in sight, I wanted to run away. So, I did... for one glorious, impromptu day. I rode a train one hour into Manhattan, window-shopped in Soho, taxi'd uptown to see the Christmas tree at the Metropolitan Museum, wandered cross-town for a spur-of-the-moment facial, met friends for dinner... and was home by 11:00! I had laughed, played, exercised, socialized, been pampered, dined, "vacated" my projects... and slept like baby. I had been in-the-moment all day long that day. Awakened refreshed, I dove into my work, met every deadline, and did so in a much better mood! Sometimes we just can't go rent that beachfront cottage. Then it's time for Plan B. Bring some of the simple vacation pleasures you enjoy into your everyday life!

Vacation Pleasure #1: "Sightseeing"

Head for the hills, the beach, forest or desert. Stroll hands-free with a fanny-pack. Explore textures, sounds, sights and smells.

Vacation Pleasure #2: "Evening Activities"

Gather friends once monthly to try new restaurants, movies, concerts, sporting event, or pack PJs for an old-fashioned "sleepover" at a friend's with board games, popcorn, s'mores and a DVD.

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Vacation Pleasure #3: "Get Pampered"

Get a free make-over in a department store, try a pedicure, reflexology, reiki, new hairstyle. Luxuriate in a hot bubble bath with candles, a tall glass of cool water, a soothing relaxation tape or music you love.

Vacation Pleasure #4: "Try New, Healthy Things"

Take a heart-healthy cooking class, pool aerobics, snorkeling, scuba, tai chi, yoga, breath-work or swing dancing. Meditate, journal. Golf? Gardening? Water Colors? ... Thai cooking! Paint a room a new color.

Vacation Pleasure #5: "Meet New People"

Volunteer, join a book discussion group. Smile at strangers. (Keep trying. *Somebody'll* smile back.)

Vacation Pleasure #6: "Change of Scenery"

Surprise your family or friends with a "mystery ride" to someplace fun!

Vacation Pleasure #7: "Sleep Late"

Stay home. (Send the kids to Grandma's or a friend's.) Curl up with a crossword puzzle or your main squeeze and watch old movies, or read something totally mindless.

Vacation Pleasure #8: "Romantic Getaway"

You might not need to *go* anywhere. Swap baby-sitting weekends with friends and order dinner in. Or book an overnight at a nearby bed & breakfast.

Vacation Pleasure #9 "Create Family Memories"

Pour through photo albums from past vacations, share memories and ask family-members what *they* remember from that trip. You might be surprised! Frame a few of those pictures to enjoy them more often. (*If you like, you can really get into this one. Create a "theme" evening. Reminiscing about Mexico? Nachos all around! Recalling the Caribbean in February? Dig out swimsuits and sandals for a snow-barbecue and limbo night.*)

Vacation Pleasure #10: "Plan Your Next Vacation"

Read travel brochures. Start a "Next Vacation" fund. Set up weekly auto-transfers. Then... really Go!

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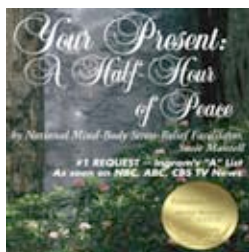


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Closing Thought:

Long ago, during a business trip, I came to a surprising but profound realization that I was calmer and better-rested than I had been at home. I wasn't at all *unhappy* at home, but I somehow just felt better on that trip. Then it happened again... and again. I knew it wasn't just being away from daily responsibilities. I was still working hard when I traveled. It was something else--something inside. I realized that while walking to appointments in London or Denver or Boston I don't know what's on the next corner, or in that shop window, or where building #731 is. I wasn't on auto-pilot but rather, fully engaged in each moment. I paused to admire displays more, chatted with shopkeepers, read menus more carefully. Mindfulness being the first principal of inner peace, all day, every day while traveling, I was in-the-moment, *every* moment. I became more Mindful at home after that, in the post-office, at the market, the gym, out in the rain or driving down my street. I discovered surprises in the details of my own small world, began rearranging artwork, moving a chair from here to there. Mindfulness, a necessity while traveling in unfamiliar cities, became a pleasure at home too, and I noticed a calmer feeling immediately!

Life is short and filled with synchronicities and surprises. We miss so many of the small moments when we forget that. Until next time, I wish you creative, refreshing moments of "vacation" whether away or right at home! © 2000, 2008, 2010 Susie Mantell, Relax Intuit™ LLC. All Rights Reserved. Federal law prohibits use of this content in whole or in part without express written consent of Relax Intuit™ LLC. For permission to use, please email the complete text of the specific article and its requested use to info@relaxintuit.com **Award-winning stress-relief expert Susie Mantell is the author of the exquisitely soothing relaxation audiobook, "Your Present: A Half-Hour of Peace," clinically approved to relieve symptoms associated with health-related, work-related, chronic and traumatic stress. Featured in The Los Angeles Times, NBC, ABC, CBS-TV, Town & Country, The American Pain Society, Hazelden and The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, listeners include The Mayo Clinic, Memorial Sloan-Kettering, The Betty Ford Center, V.A. Hospitals and Canyon Ranch ("#1 Spa"-Conde Nast Traveler). Customizing stress-reduction for Fortune 500 companies, distinguished medical centers and spas, Mantell's multi-sensory, mind-body techniques appear in national media, medical and corporate publications. Susie Mantell's stress-relief & wellness tips are intended as an adjunct to, not a substitute for, professional health care. Order "Your Present: A Half-Hour of Peace" and enjoy more of Susie Mantell's stress-relief tips at www.relaxintuit.com**



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