

How to Go on Vacation, and More Importantly, How to Come Back from Vacation

The word “vacation” comes from the word “vacate”—to be empty, to free.

The ancient Greeks defined **the purpose of vacation as one of healing, gaining perspective, and re-focusing our life’s efforts.**

Epidaurus was one of the most famous Ancient Greek seaside resorts. Vacationers would ask their gods for healing, life-directing dreams, then sleep in dream auditoriums until they received such a dream to guide them in returning to everyday life.

Um, how many of us take vacations that fit THAT description?

NOTE: I meditate, so I am always seeking mini-vacations during the day to tend to and be with myself. [But that is another blog.](#)

Taking a truly successful vacation that leaves you feeling refreshed, renewed, and re-focused (even if you don’t get a life-directing dream!) is a creative activity with three phases:

Preparation, Vacation, and Re-Entry.

Prepare, and You Won’t Despair

One of our staff just took a vacation with a triple purpose. He wanted to prepare for his state licensing, personally recharge, and decide on whether to get married. When he returned, he said it was the most restful, rejuvenating vacation he can remember taking.

What did he do? Follow these steps:

1. **Think about the purpose of your vacation well ahead of time.** Why are you going where you’re going and doing what you’re going to be doing? “To get away” or “Escape” is not a sufficient reason. Be specific. “To enhance my relationship with my family,” “to get a new perspective on my career” – are sufficient reasons.
2. **Set specific goals to fulfill your purpose.** Our staff person had time goals with his girlfriend, his books, and himself. He also set content goals. He identified subjects he wanted to discuss with her, topics to review for his exam, and concerns to consider for himself.
3. **Discuss your schedule and come to alignment with anyone traveling with you.** Share your desired outcomes and see how they can fit together.

4. **Anticipate problems and make contingency plans** in case things don't go as planned. This is crucial! It can be the difference between a new adventure and a ruined trip.

Vacation-planning mindfulness is the difference between coming back stressed out and coming back completely invigorated.

While You're Away....

Smile, relax, and focus on the goals and purpose you already determined. You've done the work. Now you can reap the rewards. Remember to **review with your travel companions regularly**. Does everyone feel satisfied? Do you need to revise anything?

Also, make a point to talk about how you would like things to feel when you get back. **What feelings and inspirations do you want to bring back with you?**

And **don't over plan!** This will NOT be the only vacation you're ever going to take. Everyone needs some unstructured, dreamy time to rejuvenate (and get that dream from the gods.) Balance activity and rest. Engage in new experiences, unusual sights and sounds, thoughts, foods, etc.

One of the reasons people like to [camp, hike, and canoe](#) is because it's stimulating without evoking a lot of our unfinished business back home. It allows us to approach our world with awe. It lets us escape the person we were in the city and discover the person we could be.

Engage in some activities that will add to your life skills. For example, I used to wonder at Judith's ability to sunbathe and read for hours on end. Then I dedicated one vacation to learning to relax. That vacation has stayed with me ever since and has served me well.

Anticipate your re-entry with relaxed determination to carry all that felt good from your vacation into your daily routine. Pick easy behavior changes you can make. Let these changes flow from your original vacation purposes and goals. That staff member I mentioned earlier? He returned more rested than ever, asked his girlfriend to marry him, and aced his test.

Re-Energize Your Re-Entry

Let's say I'm going to go on a two-week canoe trip into the Boundary Waters. For me, the purpose of that trip would be to experience a little bit of fear—the challenge of using a topographical map to portage in and navigate the area, and the excitement of experiencing myself doing exactly that!

How much of that trip can I keep living that when I come back so that I'm a little more adventuresome AND a little more mindful?

Do I have a topographical re-entry map to help me recognize the rapids and the places that are dangerous and where I need to pay special attention? What would that look like?

When we pay attention to our re-entry into our day-to-day life, we honor our purpose for going on vacation in the first place. As a result, we re-enter with renewed inspiration, rejuvenation, and an expanded sense of ourselves. And we can bring that to our co-workers, partners, and all our relationships.

No one wants to come back from a vacation filled with resentment for our life, exhaustion from an over-booked trip, or finding ourselves in victim mode for having to go back to work. We all know what that feels like.

Next time you are on your way home from an extended trip, try this instead:

1. **Ease back in.** Don't let fear drive you to try and catch up on a week's worth of work in your first hour at your desk. You don't have to "pay the price" for taking a vacation. If you must, take an extra vacation day or come back early to ensure that the first day is not over-scheduled!
2. **Allow yourself to focus on the rest and relaxation you got.** Rest is the natural balance to work. Feel your gratitude for it. Share your gratitude.
3. **Spend some time thinking about the successes and failures of this vacation.** This way, you can plan an even better vacation next time!

Re-entry is about being able to be present with yourself, reflecting, and [celebrating your life as it is](#), even though vacation is over.

To take an even bigger view, think of vacation as a metaphor for a period of time when you are more consciously and more fully present with yourself. Which is the opposite of how many of us think of it.

Instead of getting away, **use your vacation to dive deeper into you.**

You may be surprised how refreshing that can be!

Dr. Bob Wright is an internationally recognized visionary, educator, program developer, leadership and sales executive, best-selling author, and speaker. He is a co-founder of Wright and the Wright Graduate University.