LIFE HACKS

Time Off from Work Benefits: This Is How It Changes Our Brain

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Leaving the workplace for a holiday or taking a midday break to declutter the mind are activities that we love because they make us feel good.

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What's more, these disruptions in our regular schedules can cause positive changes in the mind and body on a biological level.

Namely, one study published in Translational Psychiatry concluded that vacation and meditation have a beneficial influence on the molecular networks.

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So, the next time you're planning a vacation, don't feel guilty, on the contrary, look forward to it!

How Vacation Time Changes Our Brain

In the study, 94 healthy women between the ages of 30 and 60 were closely followed.

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They were in the same resort. One half was on vacation and the other half was part of a meditation training program.

To have an understanding of the effect of meditation, the team also followed one group of 30 experienced meditators who were at the retreat in the same week.

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The team looked at 20,000 genes and the changes happening in them to track which genes changed during and after the vacation.

The results concluded that a week at the resort changed the molecular network patterns in the participants, including the beginner and experienced meditators and the vacationers.

The most notable activity in the genes was in the areas linked with areas linked to the response to stress and the immune system.

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A month after this study, the new meditators still boasted reduced symptoms of depression and enjoyed less stress when compared to the vacationers who didn't meditate.

So, though it may seem logical that vacation and meditation can help reduce stress, this is the first study that showed the changes in the genes of the body in that short amount of time.

How Vacation Time Benefits Us All

Planning a vacation helps increase the levels of happiness.

This happiness is felt from the excitement of an upcoming journey and this has been proven in a study. One found that people's moods improved around eight weeks before a vacation.

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But, it seems that the real magic happens when the vacation comes. The new surrounding influences the neural pathways and our responses, i.e., neuroplasticity. This makes us more creative.

On a daily basis, our brains are on autopilot. We know what we do and where we are and most of us follow a certain routine.

On the other hand, exposure to new places, sounds, cultures, etc. activates different synapses in the brain, encourages us to be braver, and revitalizes the brain.

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There are physical benefits too.

One study which began in 1948 and is still ongoing (Framingham Heart Study) concluded that women who vacationed once every six years had eight times higher risk of a heart attack than the ones who took a vacation at least once per two years.

What's more, in a study done by the University of Massachusetts, it was concluded that middle-aged men who vacationed on a regular basis had a 21 percent reduced likelihood of death of any cause and a 32 percent lower risk of dying from cardiovascular illness.

Sources:

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EVERY DAY HEALTH

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