

Jan 2010

By Angela Metohainakis

‘HAPPY, HEALTHY HOLIDAYS’

Ask anyone, sustaining a work-life balance is easier said than done. With the pressure of full-time work and time slipping away, it seems many are finding it hard to achieve that balance. But new research has suggested that this is one battle you can’t afford to lose. The solution? Take regular holidays!

Did you know Australian employees have clocked up over 118 million days and \$33.3 billion worth of annual leave?ⁱ These are some of the figures that Tourism Australia’s [No Leave No Life](#) campaign has uncovered in their quest to get people holidaying. Most of us, it seems, are taking less time off from our busy schedules and instead are amassing huge amounts of annual leave for a holiday that is often both a long time coming and over with too soon. It’s a daunting thought - all that work, and pending play.

According to No Leave, No Life, there are many different reasons why full-time workers feel compelled to stockpile their leave. From waiting for that ‘big holiday’, to feeling as if they need to hold the fort down at work, or fearing that their employer won’t approve of regular short breaks. But the relentless work is taking its toll – on individuals, families and businesses.

“Stockpiling leave and not taking a break contributes to many workplace concerns such as productivity, staff retention, employee commitment and morale,” said Geoff Buckley,

Managing Director, Tourism Australia. “Not to mention the effects it has on individual’s lives, such as increased stress, sick leave and the time they get to spend connecting with family and friends,” Mr Buckley said.

Of course, there are many factors involved in taking a holiday and many of us have felt the pressure to continue to work, with the only light at the end of the tunnel being that ‘big trip’. Don’t let that prevent you from treating yourself to a long weekend every now and then. Ask yourself, have you planned a break? Are you taking the right steps to organise a holiday? Or is it something you keep telling yourself you’ll get around to?

The No Leave, No Life campaign suggests the health benefits far outweigh any reason to stockpile leave and avoid short getaways. “Through No Leave, No Life we will be promoting the benefits that taking leave can deliver such as feeling refreshed, the chance to reconnect with family and friends, and being better placed to cope with the pressures of day-to-day life,” Mr Buckley said.

It seems regular holidays can promote a healthier disposition, not to mention the positive effect it has on your work life. Dr Peter Cotton, Director of Psychology Services, Health Services Australia, elaborates: “Not taking leave can often be associated with an increased risk of ‘burnout’ and stress-related problems. There is a link between not taking leave and having a poor work family balance.” The campaign highlights the many benefits that come with taking regular holidays. Overall, it helps in achieving wellness - your physical and mental well-being are dependent on you attaining a work-life balance. You can potentially increase your job satisfaction by coming back from a break refreshed and in doing so, avoid ‘burnout’. On top of that, your relationships will only be the better for it.

Taking time out with your family and friends helps you to reconnect with the ones that matter most to you. Frequent holidays can help you recover from fatigue, and promote a consistent level of relaxation. One of the key factors behind the campaign is the idea of 'seizing the moment'. Give yourself the opportunity to experience new things, gain lasting memories and remember that life is for living – and much too short to stockpile leave!

ⁱ Data File - No Leave No Life Research Findings, Tourism Australia, 2009