

# Vacations: Why do you need them?

**L**evels of stress, anxiety, and burnout have never been so high across all industries, but we see it particularly in the farming business.

Even though technology purports to simplify our lives, we're experiencing more and more over-investment in work. Many farmers tell me they're exhausted, with no time to catch up. Moreover, everyone wants it all — the perfect family, a successful business, fabulous health, and complete happiness.

We have many roles, and each of these roles requires time, energy and commitment.

Quickly, we find that our tank of energy is depleted, and we have to refill. But how?

To recover from a day's work, we must start by sleeping well. About 95 per cent of us need seven to nine hours of sleep per night. Sleeping less has an impact on your concentration, productivity, and mood.

However, to re-energize, protect oneself from psychological distress, prevent burnout, and increase well-being, creativity, and productivity, people need more than just a good night's sleep. Get more from your breaks, holidays, and vacations by incorporating one or more these beneficial ingredients.

**1. PSYCHOLOGICAL DETACHMENT** means not thinking about work and other sources of stress.

A vacation break must achieve physical, mental, and virtual distance. This is not easy when all the business papers are on the kitchen table. This is why it is sometimes necessary to leave your physical places of work from time to time. In the last few years, we have come to face a new reality: the danger of always being connected.

As Dr. Christine Grant, an occupational psychologist at Coventry University's Centre for Research in Psychology, told the BBC: "The nega-

tive impacts of this 'always on' culture are that your mind is never resting, you're not giving your body time to recover, so you're always stressed."

Plus, we now know that the more tired and stressed we become, the more mistakes we make. We increase our risk of accidents, and our mental health suffers. This is why in order to have that mental break, we have to disconnect from that phone.

You can have a wonderful week on the beach in Mexico. However, with all the apps that keep you updated 24/7 about your herd or your field, you lose the benefit of your vacation. Some farmers become addicted to productivity. They follow the fertility, health, and feeding information of every cow in the herd... even from the beach. It might be good for the productivity of their cows, but it's detrimental to the farmer and their spouse.

**2. RELAXATION** is the ability to access a low level of physical and mental activation.

Relaxation can be accomplished by practising simple breathing, meditation, yoga or walking, or by watching a good movie.

Now, a little bit of stress is actually good. The goal is to find balance. Adrenaline rushes can help get a person through a long day. However, we cannot be always on "high." Our bodies and minds need to relax. There is no need to go to meditate in Tibet. Just take five minutes of down time to decrease your cortisol levels for a couple of hours.

**3. PERSONAL CONTROL** is valuable. Developing new skills such as learning a new language, a musical instrument, or a new sport helps to de-stress. Learning or doing something else at a relaxed pace completely detaches the individual from work.

**4. CONTROL OVER FREE TIME:** The perception of having choices about how to spend your free time.

Some people try to see or do everything on holidays. A vacation won't help if you pack it with too many activities. It's fine to plan some tasks on a weekend or a vacation, but don't fill all your down time.

There needs to be a concentrated effort to find the balance that your body and mind need to not just survive but to feel vitality. In order to maintain this balance, the individual must rely more on micro-breaks, or short holidays. Although beneficial to long-term physical health, a week or two weeks of vacation may have short-lived benefits for psychological well-being. The benefits can last anywhere from a few days to few weeks. After that, there is a return to the same level of well-being you experienced before the wonderful week of vacation.

A one-week holiday per year is necessary but not sufficient. Regular, short holidays, quiet evenings at home, relaxed weekends, and daily breaks are essential to maintaining our physical and mental health.

You may think you have no time for that. As a client told me, "Life goes too fast, and there is so much to do." But instead of asking yourself if you can afford to take a little more time to refuel, perhaps you should ask yourself if you can afford not to.

Years ago, we considered Sunday sacred. It was the rest day. Today we consider it an opportunity to get a jump on our to-do lists. We have forgotten that even nature has its own cycles to rest. So, if Mother Nature needs it, why not you? **CG**



**Pierrette Desrosiers, MPS, CRHA** is a work psychologist, professional speaker, coach and author who specializes in the agricultural industry. She comes from a family of farmers and she and her husband have farmed for more than 25 years. Contact her at: [pierrette@pierrettedesrosiers.com](mailto:pierrette@pierrettedesrosiers.com). [www.pierrettedesrosiers.com](http://www.pierrettedesrosiers.com)