

SUN LIFE

Take a health break

Not taking time off can be hazardous to your health

Work hard, play hard — what a joke. There is no play!

We're stressed out, even numb, and working harder than ever for the money even though denying ourselves a rest can be hazardous to our health.

"Mini-vacations are great for breaking the cycle of stress, getting a fresh perspective, and for giving our minds and bodies a break," says stress expert Beverly Beuermann-King.

Although mini-vacations can't replenish body and soul like a two-week stint, "they can help us stay connected to family and friends and add a level of play to our lives that may be missing in our everyday work lives," she says.

If you haven't taken a break all summer, you're not alone. Canadians hand back more than 34 million days of work to employers, according to Expedia.ca. Yet getting away makes you more productive at work — you recharge and rejuvenate, says Beuermann-King.

And time away cuts down on heart disease. One study shows that "infrequent vacationers had a 20% greater risk of dying from any cause and a 50% greater chance of dying from a heart attack when compared with those who vacationed regularly," says Beuermann-King.

So get your heart racing — even for an afternoon.



JOANNE RICHARD
Life

Climb a tree, recommends Mike Wake, who offers Treetop Trekking in Ontario and Quebec, a three-hour adventure of fun, fitness and thrills.

"It's a great way to get outside of the box and have fun which relieves stress," says Wake of treetoptrekking.com.

The head tree-trekker calls it "a jungle gym on steroids" — perfect for working off worries.

According to Beuermann-King of Worksmartlivesmart.com, "stress can be very toxic — not just to the person ... but the impact can be toxic to the family, in the community and in the workplace."

Stress guru Eli Bay says that "when we are locked into habitual patterns of thinking and doing, we can get stuck into unhealthy mind-body 'programs' that can make us sick and unhappy."

Bay, founder of the Relaxation Response Institute, suggests: "If we want to stay vibrant and healthy, it's really important to take breaks and alter our patterns regularly."

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THE INNER MONKEY

I brought out my "inner monkey" while treetop trekking recently.

Harnessed in at heights of 30-50 feet, I pushed my limits and the stress went tumbling down as I made my way from tree to tree using rope bridges, zip lines, cables, climbing nets, swings and more.

Treetop Trekking at Horseshoe Valley Resort is a one-of-a-kind adventure high amongst beautiful scenery sure to melt away anyone's bad week — and, surprisingly for me, my height phobia fell away too.

After a mandatory initiation, we made our way through five amazing obstacle courses and, best of all, down the grand finale, the Big Zip, a 900-foot zip line.

This activity requires concentration and forces distraction away from everyday worries. And you really can't get any closer to nature and its healing benefits — think magnificent fall colours.

Keeping your balance while trekking is a great way to add some balance and zip to our otherwise stressful, yet predictable, lives.

There are six Treetop Trekking adventures in Eastern Canada, with plans to expand in Western Canada. Trees are not harmed in any way.

— Joanne Richard



PHOTO BY LUISE BOCHWATZ/PLAYBACK PHOTOGRAPHY



STOP STRESSING OR YOU'LL GET FAT!

Weight gain is often related to worry, reports a new study published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*.

While women put on the pounds from stress, men get fatter from fretting over money and work problems.

But try not to worry about worrying. "Despite the link between weight gain and stress, if you take care of your body

and make health a priority, you'll be fine," says Dr. Eric Plasker, author of *100 Year Lifestyle*.

Take Plasker's tips for staying healthy:

- Practice the 50-10 Rule: For every 50 minutes spent at your desk, computer or couch, get moving for 10 minutes.

- Get in shape with daily exercise, whether it is early

morning jogs or walks at lunch. Take up yoga and Pilates.

- Eat a balanced diet consisting of several small meals and snacks daily. Go easy on fried, greasy or sugary foods and enjoy superfoods, such as blueberries, almonds and salmon.

- Beat the binges: Throw out all the junk food. Keep healthy

snacks on hand.

- Freak out, but freak out differently: "Shake your body from side to side and jump up and down. This changes your physiology and your mood. When you get overwhelmed, instead of panicking, utilize stress-relieving practices such as deep breathing, meditation and stretching," suggests Plasker.