

How to Take a Life-Changing Vacation

by Mike Jaffe

It's 4pm and you have to get home to watch your kid's game. You also have to plan for your daughter's birthday party, you have a big presentation tomorrow, the house is a mess, the garage needs cleaning, crabgrass is starting to take over the lawn, the bills are due, you need to dispute some credit card charges, you just got a cranky email from your boss, the electrician hasn't called you back, your spouse is feeling disconnected from you...and it's only Tuesday.

Many of us get away from it all by taking a vacation. We spend a week relaxing, exploring and having fun, temporarily forgetting about all of the day-to-day stress we face. The problem is that nothing in our life has really changed. We return home from the vacation and within two days our vacation feels like it was two months ago. Before long we find ourselves sucked back into the same routines and stresses we had before we left, wishing and waiting for that next chance to escape.

We didn't need a vacation—what we needed was a *productive* vacation!

Not just a means to liberate us from our day-to-day captivity, vacations provide the perfect opportunity to candidly assess what's not working in our lives. They can allow us to escape from constant daily interruptions and gain focus and motivation to design and create the life we really want. This does not mean we should have less fun on our trip. In fact, a productive vacation will provide us with plenty of fun as well as time to ground ourselves, revisit our priorities, and rebalance our perspective. (See "The 7 R's of a Life-Changing Vacation")



Life is getting more and more stressful. Since most of us only get a few weeks of vacation per year, it is important to make the most of this time so that its effects are longer lasting and we're not simply counting the days until our next opportunity to flee!

Mike Jaffe serves as an inspiring Human WakeUp Call in a stressful, uneasy world. Founder Jaffe Life Design, LLC., Mike is a 9/11 survivor who has transformed his life. He now uses his own brush with tragedy to enable individuals to realize the potential in their own lives and businesses, empowering them to break free of complacency, make conscious choices, and challenging them to overcome their limiting beliefs to live life on their own terms. To learn about his powerful speaking, coaching and workshops, or to receive Mike's free inspirational audio course '7 Steps to Wake Up and Live An Extraordinary Life!', visit www.jaffelifedesign.com.

The 7 R's of a Life-Changing Vacation

To have a productive vacation, it's more a matter of what you do than where you go. Follow these simple guidelines to have yourself a wonderful and lasting trip:

- **Record.** Before your vacation, think about what you want to get from this trip and how you will spend the time. How much will you engage in work? Do you plan to exercise? How do you want to eat? What activities would you like to try? Record everything in a journal and revisit it each morning during your trip to stay grounded in your vacation goals. Use them as guidelines, not as strict rules.
- **Relax.** The tempo in which we live feels like a sprint. Unless we take a break from that hectic pace, we will burn out. The first thing to do on your vacation is decompress and slow it down. **TURN OFF THE PDA!** I'm not saying you won't think about work at all but give yourself a day or two to just relax and quiet your mind. Don't overbook the first two days so you are running from one activity to another. You need to de-clutter and rest your mind and body to enable you to think objectively later.
- **Replenish.** Breathe, my friend, breathe! Take five slow, deep breaths (remember how to do that?) every morning and before each meal and feel the stress melt away. Drink more water than you are used to—about 8 glasses per day. Your body needs it—few of us drink adequate water regularly.
- **Reconnect.** This is a great time to reconnect with your spouse, family and friends and set your goals together. What do you want to create for yourselves in the next year? As a couple, make sure you have some time alone during the day and not just before going to bed each night. Hold hands, laugh, take walks, kiss, talk, talk some more, share secrets, create a safe and trusting space around you and be generous with each other. These small things create the sense of intimacy we lose so easily when engulfed by our daily lives.
- **Reach.** Most of us find comfort in our routines even if they are somewhat restrictive. Now is your chance to try something you normally wouldn't do. Go parasailing, kayaking, or hiking. Do one thing that gets your blood pumping and even scares you a little bit—reach a little (take all safety precautions please—this is not about being reckless). This is exactly what you need to recalibrate your inner perspective. Once you've snorkeled next to a sea turtle, that presentation you have to give doesn't seem so intimidating.
- **Rebalance.** Now that you've rediscovered your pulse and confidence, it's time to look at your life and work objectively. Without the daily grind and chaos, your mind will be clear to reflect on strategy and planning for the next few months. You may even gain a few insights. Share ideas with your spouse or friends (see 'Reconnect'). In what areas of your life are you unsatisfied? What are some things you've wanted to do but haven't had the time? How can you get your life back into the right balance for you?
- **Recommit.** By now, you don't want your vacation to end but hopefully you're not feeling the dread of returning back to your life. While you are feeling recharged and excited about putting these new ideas in place, create your action plan (even if it's on a cocktail napkin) for the steps you'll take when you return home and fully commit to them. Once at home, get in action immediately to keep the momentum alive from the productive and fun vacation you just enjoyed.