



**Mind:** I Need a Vacation – Gotta Get Away  
**Body:** Memory, Stress and Alzheimer's Disease  
**Spirit:** Stillness

## I Need a Vacation – Gotta Get Away



### What We Expect

Vacations – we sure look forward to them. Whether it is an action-packed adventure, lounging on the beach with a good book, a spiritual retreat, educational discovery, or anything in-between, when we go on vacation, we expect to come back...different. Restored, rejuvenated, revitalized, re-focused, or even reinvented, we often have expectations about what the vacation can do. A heavy row to hoe for those vacation fairies!

### Why We Expect So Much

It seems like the speed of life is accelerating. I remember in the 1990s when faxes were introduced to the workplace as a regular means of sharing and communication. My executive secretary was concerned. She felt that the expectation for an immediate and quick response fed reactionary and less thoughtful responses. I often wonder what she would think of the evolution of mail to fax to email to text to Instagram! (Even the name implies immediacy!)

Regardless of our life circumstance, many long to

escape the stress of daily living... and for good reason.

We know that too much stress can hurt us. According to the American Institute of Stress, chronic stress can impair our immune system as well as our ability to respond effectively to inflammation. This in turn can impact our ability to be adequately protected by our vaccinations and to fight off the impact of degenerative diseases. Furthermore, chronic stress can reduce our production of telomerase which can lead ultimately to reduction in our longevity. Bottom line – chronic stress reduces not only the quality of our lives, it also impacts the length of our lives.

No wonder we feel the need to turn to vacations to address our stress levels and attempt to restore our sense of balance and well-being.

### How to Do It Right

Not surprisingly, vacations are not created equal. A study conducted in the Netherlands found that most folks did not return happier from a vacation. Looking deeper into the study, it was revealed that moderate to high 'travel-stress' vacations had a negative impact on the happiness rating when the vacationers returned home.

This led Shawn Achor and Michelle Gielan to design and conduct a study to give us some insight into how we can mitigate 'travel-stress' and increase



the potential for a positive response to our vacation time. Ultimately, the better the planning, the better the vacation experience, and the better the post-vacation outcomes. Here are some tips they recommend:

1. Focus on the details. Uncertainty during the vacation created the most travel-stress. Take care of as many of the details as you can before you leave to reduce the chance of unnecessary surprises – especially in unfamiliar locations.
2. Plan more than one month ahead. The majority of the respondents in the study with a stressful score had left the planning to the last minute – even edging into the trip itself.
3. Go far away. This was an interesting result. Unquestionably, the highest rated trips were those experienced the farthest away from your home. Furthermore, 94% of vacationers who travelled away from their home scored their vacation as more meaningful than those who elected for a ‘stayvacation.’
4. Meet with someone knowledgeable at the location. Managing travel details, lack of knowledge of the location, and not feeling safe contributed the most to travel-stress. Vacationers who connected with a knowledgeable local friend or host had the least stressful experience.

Done right, you can increase your positive vacation experiences. More than half of the participants in the study (who had lower stress vacations,) returned home with higher levels of energy, greater efficiency and production and enhanced overall feeling of happiness. Looks like renewing those passports can renew our lives!

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## Memory, Stress and Alzheimer’s Disease

We turn again to the American Institute of Stress (AIS) to learn about the link between stress and memory. We have reported in previous editions that cells in the hippocampus are responsible for the storage and retrieval of memory. According to the AIS, studies now show that those individuals who demonstrate mild cognitive impairment due to stress or depression were more likely to develop Alzheimer’s Disease.

## Stillness



“There are times when we stop, we sit still. We listen and breezes from a whole other world begin to whisper.”

James Carroll