

# The Wellness Exchange



A Publication of  
**BUSINESS HEALTH SERVICES™**

*Solutions for a Healthier Workplace™*

For more information call 1-800-765-3277 or visit [www.bhsonline.com](http://www.bhsonline.com)



## Post Vacation Blues Minimizing Your Vacation Stress

You have been waiting for that vacation for months. High expectations and excitement go into planning every phase of your perfect vacation. Your vacation date arrives and everything seems to be going as planned.

But a day or two before your vacation is over, you start feeling this nagging pull, the realization that you will have to go back to life as it was before the vacation, before the months of excitement leading up to the vacation. Returning home from your vacation brings the reality that life is returning to your normal routine. Then it hits, the "Post Vacation Blues."

Feeling blue after a vacation is not unusual. On vacation, we typically get enough sleep, take it as slow or as fast as we want, and usually do the things that we enjoy. When returning home, we suddenly have to switch gears from our free flowing vacation and take on the more structured responsibilities of work, family, and home; a tough transition for anyone.



While feeling let down after vacation is not uncommon, it can be minimized. Whether you spend your vacation on an exotic island or lounging by the backyard pool, here are some tips for fending off those pesky post-vacation blues:

**Remember to relax** – Choose vacation activities that will make you feel refreshed and renewed, not exhaust you. Beating the blues will be twice as difficult if your vacation wipes you out.

**Be creative with your vacation time** – Rather than take a two-week vacation, take several long weekends and plan interesting activities. This way you will always have something to look forward to.

**Schedule transition time** – Try returning home on a Friday, so you have a couple of days to prepare for the work week; it can help ease the transition to your duties.

**Use your vacation as a catalyst for change** – If you dread the thought of returning to work, make the decision to go back refreshed and ready to make some productive changes, such as improving your delegating skills, practicing better time management or organizing your work space.

**Plan to do something fun after your trip** – Go out to dinner with friends or take the kids to the zoo. Rather than dreading going home, you'll have a pleasant activity to anticipate.

**Accentuate the positive** – Upon returning to the challenges of daily living go over your photos and souvenirs to relive enjoyable moments from your trip. You may also find it helpful to remind yourself of the things you like most about your life and environment including your community and friends as well as the comforts and securities of home.

### No Vacation On The Horizon?

Bring some of the simple vacation pleasures you enjoy into your everyday life!

#### #1: "SIGHTSEEING"

Head for the hills, beach, forest, or desert. Stroll hands free with a fanny-pack. Explore textures, sounds, sights, and smells.

#### #2: "GET PAMPERED"

Get a free make-over in a department store, try a pedicure, reflexology, reiki, or a new hairstyle.

#### #3: "EVENING ACTIVITIES"

Gather friends once monthly to try new restaurants, movies, concerts, or sporting events. Or pack PJ's and a toothbrush for an old-fashioned "sleeeover" at a friend's house.


#### #4: "TRY NEW, HEALTHY THINGS"

Take a heart-healthy cooking class, pool aerobics, snorkeling, scuba, tai chi, or yoga class. Meditate, write in a journal, or paint a room a fresh, new color.

#### #5: "ROMANTIC GETAWAY"

You might not need to 'go' anywhere! Swap baby-sitting weekends with friends and order dinner in. Or book an overnight at a nearby bed & breakfast.

#### #6: "MEET NEW PEOPLE"

Volunteer, join a book discussion group. Smile at strangers every day. (Keep trying. Somebody'll smile back.) 

**Remember, vacations are essential. Taking time off from work reduces stress, improves emotional well being, and boosts productivity levels. However, if your "Post Vacation Blues" continue for a prolonged period of time, you may want to consult with a professional counselor.**



# Are You Contagious?



*It only takes a sneeze, a cough, or a handshake to spread cold or flu germs from one person to another; but emotions can be transmitted even more easily. Unfortunately, all the vitamin C in the world won't prevent you from catching and passing the emotional bug!*

Just think... you were in a great mood until your colleague came over and began complaining about the new company policy and all of a sudden your mood plummets. Perhaps you were in the worst mood until the kid in the cart in front of you at the grocery store smiles and waves at you. You find yourself smiling and waving back and suddenly your spirits are lifted. Ever wonder why?



## Emotional Contagion

Emotional contagion is the tendency to express and feel emotions that are similar to and influenced by those of others. It happens quickly; you can almost instantly catch someone else's mood without a conscious thought. We can become "infected" by the emotions and moods of others around us **and vice versa**. If you're the receiver, you may not know what happened, just that you feel different after the encounter.

## Are You At Risk?

You are most likely to catch the moods of the people who are closest to you; for example, spouses, parents, children and close friends. People who are considered extroverts and who are more emotionally expressive tend to transmit their feelings more powerfully. Introverts and highly sensitive individuals tend to be more susceptible to the moods of others. Women may be inclined to catch someone else's mood because they are better able to read other people's emotional states and body language.



## The Good & The Bad



You can catch and spread positive and negative emotions such as:

- \* euphoria
- \* elation
- \* sadness
- \* depression
- \* anger

As individuals, we respond to social signals. Therefore, if you smile at someone; they are likely to smile back. A bad mood will have the same effect - it doesn't make you feel good, or help the people around you.

## Getting Swept Up

Generally, people don't mind getting swept up in another person's excitement or good cheer — they're happy to go along for the ride. The challenge arises when you start frequently soaking up other people's negative emotions. At this point a desire for self-preservation may kick in.

The good part is, you can learn how to inoculate yourself from other people's negativity while keeping yourself open to catching their positive moods.

## Protect Yourself

Here are some steps for protecting yourself from the negative emotions of others:

1. Begin paying attention to how you feel around different people. Do you feel sad around some people and happy around others?
2. Become aware of and label your emotional responses. "I felt elated while having dinner with my wife" or "I feel pessimistic when I am around my coworker."
3. Examine your emotional responses. Ask yourself whether the feeling is your own or did you catch it from someone else.

Protecting yourself from emotional contagion involves monitoring your own floodgates and not allowing yourself to become contaminated with other people's negativity. Simply recognizing that an emotion actually originated with someone else can be enough to prevent the mood from spreading to you.

When self-help strategies aren't enough to improve your mood, it may be time to seek professional help. Remember, we are here to assist you 24/7 for any work or personal problems.

## Take The Quiz!

To find out how easily someone else's mood can infect you, take the following quiz. Read each statement and rate yourself as follows:

1. Never    2. Rarely    3. Sometimes    4. Often    5. Always

1. I'm good at sensing other's moods.
2. If someone I'm talking with cries, my eyes well up too.
3. Spending time with an upbeat friend lifts up my mood.
4. I feel sad when people talk about the death of a loved one.
5. Seeing a mother and child hugging makes me feel tender.
6. I'm irritated around angry people.
7. When someone smiles warmly at me, I smile back and feel happy.
8. I get uptight when I'm around people who are stressed out.
9. I notice how people say things in addition to what they say.
10. If I overhear a quarrel, my body is likely to tense up.
11. When someone I love touches me, my body tingles with excitement.
12. When someone paces, it makes me nervous.

To find your Mood Infection Index, add up your answers to the quiz:

**If you scored 12-27:** You have mood immunity. Maybe you are in touch with your own moods, but you can only guess what other people are feeling.

**28-41:** You've achieved emotional equilibrium. You're able to understand and experience other people's feelings without becoming overwhelmed by them.

**42-60:** You're on an emotional roller coaster. Because you're easily swept away by the joys and sorrows of other people, you be in may need of emotional rescue.