



How and Why to Take a “Mental Vacation”

First, what does it mean to take a “mental vacation?” A mental vacation is a “planned break that should be rich in detail — devoid of any interference from real life.”

According to Shawn Achor, author of *The Happiness Advantage*, “We’ve lost even the micro-moments during the day” that give our brains a rest. “Our brains never have the bandwidth to actually recharge or rejuvenate.”

Achor shares how these moments of quiet and disconnection are important to help our brains realize we can have that separation and still have that productivity and happiness.

For these reasons and many more, it’s critical for all of us to take a mental vacation a little every day. Here are some easy ways to take a mental vacation:

- Unplug electronics. Turn off your PC(s) and/or mobile device(s) and take in your surroundings.
- Get outdoors. Visit a park or a favorite spot nearby and appreciate the beauty you see around you.
- Explore different cultures. Check out museums, see a musical at a community theatre, listen to live music, etc.
- Go for a quiet, solo drive. Take a brief drive alone in the afternoon and keep the radio off for the first 10 minutes.
- Sip coffee. Take a coffee break to destress, relax and feel the continuous stream of self-esteem boosters.
- Close your eyes and sleep. Take a power nap for five to 30 minutes at any time during the day to recharge.
- Spoil yourself. Indulge in something relaxing like a massage, facial, bubble bath or other self-care treat.
- Do or try relaxing activities. Engage in new or favorite activities or hobbies that are purely fun and/or relaxing (e.g., yoga). Something as simple as playing tropical music (like a steel drum station on Pandora) might be enough to relax your shoulders and your mind.
- Lighten your list. Try to get as much work done as possible before your first break of the day, stay organized and prioritize your tasks.

[Click here](#) for more ways to take a mental vacation!

*The Professional’s Guide to a Stress-Free Vacation,” Carolyn O’Hara, hbr.org, Aug. 14, 2014.

*7 Ways to Take a Mental Health Vacation (Without Getting on a Plane,” Ashley Laderer, talkspace.com, March 15, 2018.

*8 Ways Parents Take Mental Vacations From Life,” Jon Helmkamp, huffpost.com, June 3, 2015.

*How You Can Take a Mental Vacation in Pandemic? – 5 Step Guide,” Manas Bhardwaj, medium.com, Nov. 18, 2020.

▶ Car Winter Emergency

Essential Tips To Stay Safe This Winter

No one wants to think about the possibility of being stranded in the cold with a car emergency; however, it can happen to anyone. It's smart to be prepared just in case it may happen to you.

Follow these guidelines to stay safe during a potential car emergency this winter:

- ▶ Research your insurance policies or other programs you may belong to and know what kind of towing/roadside assistance services are available to you.
- ▶ Create an emergency kit that stays in your car and includes: a windshield scraper, blankets, hats and gloves, a small shovel, jumper cables, a can of fix-a-flat,

a spare tire with air in it and the essentials to change a spare tire, a first-aid kit, a multipurpose utility tool, handwarmers, extra non-perishable snacks, water bottles, a flashlight, and possibly a candle with a container and book of matches.

- ▶ Store extra windshield wiper fluid in your car.
- ▶ Keep your cellphone fully charged before leaving in your car.
- ▶ Have a list of important phone numbers written down or memorized in case you have no phone battery power and need to reach someone.
- ▶ Consider hiding cash somewhere in your vehicle in case of an emergency.

If you get stuck in the snow or your car stops running:

- ▶ Stay with your car.
- ▶ Be visible when waiting for assistance. At night, keep a dome light (the interior cabin light with a dome-shaped cover that is attached to your car's ceiling) on, if possible.
- ▶ Conserve your fuel by only running your engine and heater long enough to take the chill out of the air.
- ▶ Keep warm with anything you have available, such as floor mats, newspapers or other clothing items.

*Be Prepared With a Winter Car Emergency Kit," Consumer Reports, Dec. 14, 2017.

One-Pot Mediterranean Vegan Paella

Prep Time: 20 minutes
Cook Time: 45 Minutes
Serves: 4

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 onions, thinly sliced
- 1 red pepper, sliced
- 1 yellow pepper, sliced
- 1 eggplant, halved and cut into half moons
- 2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon sundried tomato purée
- 1 ½ cups paella rice
- 3 ½ cups vegetable stock
- ½ cup cooked large artichokes, halved and cut into pieces
- ⅓ cup mixed pitted olives
- ⅓ cup sundried tomatoes, sliced
- Small bunch of fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped
- Lemon wedges
- Tabasco to serve (optional)

Step 1:

Pre-heat the oven to 375 F. On the stove over medium-high heat, warm the olive oil in a pan to cook the onions, peppers and eggplant with a pinch of salt for 10 minutes or until they've started to caramelize and soften. Then, add the garlic and cook for one minute before stirring in the tomato purée and rice. Continue stirring until all the grains are coated.

Step 2:

Transfer the vegetable mixture into a casserole dish. Pour in the stock, artichoke pieces, olives and sundried tomatoes. Season and mix well. Bake for 45 minutes or until the rice is cooked and crisping on top.

Step 3:

Scatter fresh parsley over the finished dish and serve with lemon wedges and Tabasco, if desired.

Recipe adapted from olivemagazine.com.