

Short trips, the road to de-stress

To mentally rejuvenate and de-stress, the obvious choice may be to take time off from work or get away from the routine at home with a vacation, but a psychologist at the University of Alabama at Birmingham says a long vacation may not be your best bet.



“Although vacations themselves rank fairly low on the list of stressors, they combine elements like travel, sleep disruption, and food changes that can themselves be stressful,” explained Dr. Christopher Robinson, a psychology professor.

Robinson, who said research has shown that people who were about to go on vacation were happier—evidence that anticipation of a break is a mental perk—offered tips to maximize the short-term increase of happiness vacations provide:

- Take shorter trips throughout the year instead of only one long vacation.
- Sprinkle spontaneous weekend getaways into the schedule.
- Request a morning off after an evening out to extend the break.

Whether it is hiking or camping, a relaxed family game night, golf, going to the beach or getting a baby sitter and having an evening out with one’s partner or friends, Robinson encouraged fitting in regular mental health breaks.

“I find that regularly taking time to sit around a fire pit with friends helps me de-stress far better than involved vacations with tons of planning,” Robinson said. “While what’s relaxing varies from person to person, any time off that offers an escape from the everyday can help.”