

Getting & Keeping the Vibe

By Susan Schilke; June 3, 2018

My husband and I just took a ‘real’ vacation. We traveled to St. Lucia for an amazing time scuba diving, hiking, snorkeling, visiting the sites, dining and relaxing. We truly got away from it all!

According to Dr. Shimi Kang, a psychiatrist and frequent speaker on work-life balance, the ideal vacation contains a mix of ‘relaxed wakefulness’ and ‘play.’ Play is engaging the brain in a fun, new activity required for neuroplasticity. Your mind needs variety to recalibrate and dig new neuropathways that freshen and broaden your perspective. Relaxed wakefulness is a state of meditative bliss that requires being unplugged. It gives you all the benefits of meditation – reduced anxiety, improved perspective, more creativity and a better ability to connect to others.

We worked hard beforehand to clear the decks. We didn’t take a computer, and left our phones in the safe at our villa most of the time. I posted my first-ever automatic vacation response. Our kids were the exception – it would have been more stressful to have no contact with them so we sent a few pics each day and checked in. We limited activities to give us time to relax and enjoy the idyllic setting. Our lives were about nature, relaxation, recreation and each other. It was spectacular.

On the way home, we developed our own ‘Lessons from St. Lucia,’ and it’s interesting to see the alignment to these two concepts of relaxed wakefulness and play in our first two lessons:

#1. Get out of your comfort zone.

#2. It’s ok to be out of touch for a while – you’re really not missing much.

Probably the most important lesson from St. Lucia is our last one – “Keep the Vibe.” This is the hardest thing to do after vacation. Here are some tips on getting the benefits of relaxed wakefulness and play into your everyday life:

Get Outside More. St. Lucia is an open air country – there was no A/C in our villa except courtesy of mother nature and the trade winds. We were outside most of every day. We napped poolside – once in a gentle rain shower. Bliss. Science shows that just 20 minutes outdoors will revitalize you!

Find Downtime and Fun Daily. I know, I know – there’s so much to do. But take some time to eliminate activities that are low reward (social media?) and add activities you enjoy. Every day. Listen to music you love. Read a great book for a few minutes every day. More importantly, turn all your screens off and put your devices away. It slows down time in a beautiful way.

Get Enough Rest. I know, I know – there’s so much to do. But admit it, some of your sleep deprivation is self-inflicted. Shut everything down and head to bed earlier. Take a nap on the weekends. Make sleep and rest a priority every week – it’s worth it!

Practice Gratitude. We appreciate the world around us so much when we vacation someplace amazing, and we take a positive approach of enjoyment to all our activities. You can do that every day – there is always beauty around you (we live in Florida), and if there’s not enough for you, find more. Add some art or photos to your walls. Get fun fresh flowers for your desk or counter at home. Then remind yourself to be grateful for all you have every day – including your job!

Disconnect to Reconnect. Put away your devices and turn off your screens for some time every day to just talk to the ones you love most. Doing this every day keeps your connections strong.

I keep thinking about a couple we saw on the trip. We were sitting on the water enjoying the view and breeze and chatting about our adventures. I glanced at the next table and both were head down engrossed on their phones, her knee bouncing up and down in stress. We don’t want to be those people. You don’t either. So take a ‘real’ vacation this summer, truly get away, and Keep the Vibe!