

Wise Use of Time Off

The Time Off Test

Whether you work at a day camp, overnight camp or another youth-serving organization you'll need energy and patience all season long. To test whether you've spent your time off wisely, simply ask yourself, upon returning to camp, "Do I feel relaxed, refreshed, and ready to go?"

Your honest answer to that single question will help you plan for the next time off. If your answer is "Yes," then you're probably doing what you need to be doing. If, on the other hand, your answer is: "No. I feel worse than when I left," then you should revise your plans for the next night or day off.

Poor Use of Time Off Includes:

- Driving outrageous distances. (Try not to spend more than 25% of your time off in the car.)
- Binge drinking. (This is both dangerous and draining. You're likely to return to camp spent.)
- Using illegal drugs or someone else's prescription medication.
- Staying up most of the night.
- Anything that causes you to return to camp stressed, sleepy, or impaired in some way.
- Dangerous risk-taking. Your campers are counting on you for the whole season, so refrain from potentially lethal activities, such as cliff jumping, bridge jumping, drunk driving, etc.

Wise Use of Time Off Includes:

- Planning ahead to do something fun and relaxing, (e.g., movies, hikes, museums, sight-seeing, shopping), perhaps using the camp's day-off binder.
- Staying fairly close to camp. (Not too much driving.)
- Some solitary or mellow activities (e.g., writing, drawing, canoeing, hiking, going to the beach).
- Getting a decent night's sleep.
- Taking advantage of your in-camp time off. Even 30 minutes off can help you recharge, so use it wisely!



To Maintain Your Stamina During the Season:

- Get adequate sleep each night. If you can get 8+ hours each night, you'll be in top form.
- Eat a healthy diet full of fruits, vegetables, and protein. Don't eat too much junk food.
- Exercise. If your job at camp is rather sedentary, it's important to make time to work out. And if your job is quite active, you still need time for yourself, to focus and to reach your personal fitness goals.
- Meditate. Your temper and concentration will improve if you meditate just 5 minutes each day. Find a quiet spot and a relaxed position, close your eyes, breathe deeply, and let your mind focus on a word, phrase, or peaceful scene. Learn more at: <http://www.mbmi.org>
- Try progressive muscle relaxation. Systematically tensing and relaxing each muscle group of your body relieves tension and stress. Learn more at: <http://www.guidetopsychology.com/pmr.htm>
- Maintain a positive attitude. Remember that young people will naturally test limits, act impulsively, exude energy and have trouble listening. Don't take their normal misbehaviors personally.