



GIVE YOUR MIND A BREAK

# Press Pause: Time Off for Your Mental Health



**M**odern life is busy. Balancing work, family, and responsibilities can leave little room for relaxation. While it's easy to think pushing through the stress is productive, research shows that taking time off is crucial for maintaining mental and emotional well-being.

Stepping away from your usual routine — whether for a vacation, a weekend retreat, or even a single day of rest — allows your brain to recharge. The result? Reduced stress, enhanced creativity, improved focus, and better emotional resilience.

If you've been hesitant to take time off, reframe your mindset and recognize that your compensation includes vacation time for a reason. Prioritizing mental wellness is just as important as caring for your physical health.

## THE MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF TIME OFF

Taking time away from your regular routine offers numerous psychological benefits. Here's how a well-deserved break can support your mental health:

- 1 Feel the stress melt away.** Stepping away from work and daily pressures can significantly lower cortisol levels, helping to reduce feelings of burnout and anxiety. Even those in high-pressure roles—like surgeons—benefit from taking short breaks throughout the day. You don't need hours; even a few minutes can make a difference.
- 2 Get a creativity and productivity boost!** Exposure to new experiences, even during a short trip, stimulates the brain, enhancing problem-solving and creativity. That means when it's time to clock back in for work, you've given yourself the opportunity to see your role with a fresh perspective.

### Try these quick stress-reducing tips during your day:

- Take a brief walk around the office
- Stand up and stretch to reset your body and mind
- Do a few deep breathing exercises at your desk
- Hydrate

**Small breaks = big benefits for your mental well-being.**



### FOLLOW THE MOUSE:

We've hyperlinked resources you may want to access. Just hover and click!

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Continued from page 1

- 3 Improve the quality of your sleep.** Time off can help regulate sleep patterns, leading to more restful and restorative sleep. One study showed that participants who took a one-week vacation significantly improved their sleep quality and overall well-being.
- 4 Enhance your overall emotional well-being.** For many people, taking a vacation from work means bringing along the whole family. Connecting with loved ones, enjoying nature, or simply resting can lift your mood and provide an enhanced perspective. After all, the memories made during a trip with family, friends, or your partner will last a lifetime.
- 5 Lower the risk of chronic conditions.** Consistent work-related stress is linked to heart disease and other health concerns. Taking breaks, whether it's a 10-minute pause or a weeklong vacation, can reduce these risks.

## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR TIME OFF

To maximize the mental health benefits of your time away, consider these tips:

**Unplug from Work** – Set boundaries by turning off notifications and stepping away from emails. Allow yourself to fully disconnect.

- 1 Engage your senses.** Spend time in nature (Cook County has over [70,000 acres of forest preserves](#)), enjoy the flavors of a new meal, or listen to calming music. This can help ground you in the moment.
- 2 Practice mindfulness.** Take time to reflect, breathe deeply, and appreciate the present. Mindfulness reduces stress and enhances relaxation.
- 3 Stay flexible.** Avoid over-scheduling while you're away. Give yourself space to rest and enjoy spontaneous moments.
- 4 Reconnect with joy.** Whether it's reading, painting, hiking, or spending time with loved ones, lean into activities that bring you joy.

## SUPPORT WHEN YOU NEED IT

If stress feels overwhelming or the thought of taking time off creates anxiety, support is available. The ComPsych EAP provides confidential counseling and stress management resources. Sometimes, talking with a mental health professional can help you identify what's preventing relaxation and offer strategies to make time off more restorative. Explore available resources through [ComPsych EAP](#). You can also call 1-800-890-1213. You'll be connected with a compassionate, highly trained professional who will listen to your concerns and help guide you to the right support services.

## YOUR MENTAL RESET AWAITS

Think of your time off as a chance to care for your mental and emotional well-being. Whether it's a peaceful staycation or a trip to somewhere new, each break is an opportunity to recharge, reset, and return with renewed energy.

Give yourself permission to take that break. Your mind and body will thank you. For support in managing stress or planning your wellness journey, explore the ComPsych EAP today.

## WAYS TO TAKE A MEANINGFUL BREAK

Taking time off doesn't have to mean booking a week-long vacation to a faraway destination. Even small breaks can offer big mental health benefits. Here are a few options to consider:

### STAYCATION

Explore! Attend a festival or check out a museum. Unplug from work, indulge in hobbies, and enjoy downtime at home. Our community has plenty of festivals and fairs all summer long!

### WEEKEND GETAWAY

A quick trip to a nearby town or nature spot can feel like a mini-vacation. Just a change of scenery can refresh your mind.

### MENTAL HEALTH DAY

Take a day off to rest, reflect, and recharge. Whether it's relaxing with a book, enjoying a long walk, or catching up on sleep, a day focused on self-care is valuable.

### ADVENTURE TRAVEL

If you have the time and resources, traveling to a new destination offers opportunities for cultural experiences, relaxation, and filling your cup. Experiencing something unfamiliar stimulates cognitive growth and can boost creativity.



**A Healthier Tomorrow Starts Today!**

**Wellness is on the way!**  
*The 2025 Cook County Employee Health Fairs are coming!*

This year, it's **more fun, more education, more prizes—just MORE!** All tailored to support you and your personal wellness journey.

**Don't miss it—spread the word!**  
*(Details on the next page)*

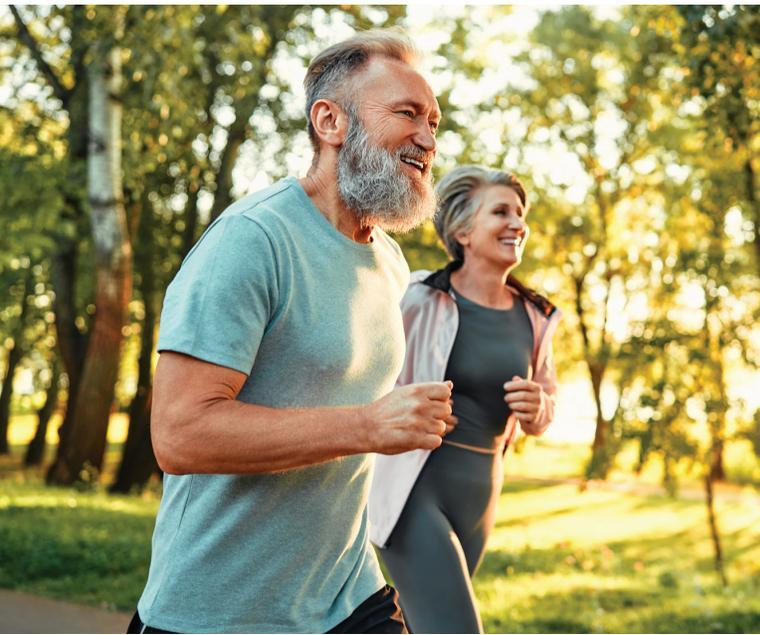


**SOURCES:** [Mental Health First Aid](#), [US Department of Health and Human Services](#), [The BBC](#), [St. Penn Hospital Foundation](#), [Huber et. al.](#), [Albulescu et. al.](#)



# A Healthier Tomorrow Starts Today!

Save the dates!  
 Save the dates!  
 Save the dates!  
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## JUNE 3-13: The Countdown Begins!

President Preckwinkle invites you to the **2025 Cook County Employee Health Fairs!**

Wellness is not **one-size-fits-all**—it's personal, and this year's Health Fairs are designed with **you** in mind.

Explore interactive experiences, educational activities, and exciting giveaways that support your unique health journey.

**Bring your Cook County Employee ID— and a co-worker. See you there!**

### On-site Events

<b>TUESDAY, JUNE 3</b> 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Juvenile Temporary Detention Center Auditorium 1100 S. Hamilton Ave.	<b>THURSDAY, JUNE 5</b> 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Stroger Hospital Lower-Level Cafeteria 1969 W. Ogden Ave.
<b>TUESDAY, JUNE 10</b> 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Cook County Building 7th Floor 118 N. Clark St.	<b>FRIDAY, JUNE 13</b> 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Criminal Courthouse 2nd Floor Cafeteria 2650 S. California Ave.

### Virtual Events

<b>WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4</b> 11-11:45 a.m. 2-2:45 p.m.	<b>WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11</b> 9:30-10:15 a.m.; 11-11:45 a.m. 2-2:45 p.m.
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Connect with your myHealth Connections community on Facebook for the latest 2025 health fairs updates and more.



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