



A Sweet Conspiracy
How sugar is being snuck into your diet

HOW HEALTHY ARE YOU?
TAKE OUR QUIZ ON PAGE 63

Natural Health

THE GUIDE TO TRUE WELLNESS

Get fit
for good!

LOSE WEIGHT, GET MORE ENERGY, AND FEEL GREAT

9 easy ways
to make exercise
a lifetime habit

SECRET HEALING POWERS
of 8 Common Herbs

OUT OF THE BLUES
5 Natural Solutions
to Depression

OUR GUIDE TO
ETHICAL INVESTING
Use Your Money to
Build a Better World

revive
your
spirit
How to take
a lifesaving
break from
work



Display until February 13

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2001



USA \$4.95 CANADA \$5.95

www.naturalhealthmag.com

When you're in serious need of rest and reflection, one or two weeks of vacation doesn't cut it. These four workers took extended leaves—and transformed their lives.

By Erin O'Donnell

escape the rat



AMERICANS GET PRECIOUS LITTLE TIME AWAY FROM work. We have an average of 16 paid vacation days annually, while Spanish workers get 30 days and Swedes get 32, mandated by law. On top of skimpy vacation time, innovations like email mean we're spending our evening and weekend hours doing work from home. Record numbers of us are working at least 60 hours a week regularly.

It's unfortunate, because breaks from work could save our lives. Middle-aged men who take yearly vacations reduce their chances of dying from heart attacks by as much as one-third, according to a study reported last March by the American Psychosomatic Society.

Despite this wave of workaholicism, some people are realizing they need time away. And they're doing something about it. They're asking the boss for a sabbatical—and the boss is saying yes. Their leaves range in length from two months to a year, and although some employers pay a partial salary, most are unpaid. These employees are using the time to pursue

dreams like learning a language or hiking the Appalachian Trail, or to get reacquainted with their kids.

If you think sabbaticals are just a privilege for wealthy executives, think again, says Hope Dlugozima of Atlanta, career coach for i-Village.com, who talked to 200 leave-takers for her book *Six Months Off* (Henry Holt, 1996). "Sabbaticals are more about a mind-set than a bank account balance," she says. "The real stumbling block is the fear that you're doing something that's not the norm. If you can break out of that thinking, you can find a way." The people Dlugozima interviewed weren't rich, but still managed to pull themselves away for a health-boosting break.

The benefits can be huge, she says. A sabbatical gives you a rest from the daily grind and a healthy sense of perspective, and it boosts your self-confidence. "When you do something like this, it gives you a certain courage," Dlugozima says. For inspiration, here are three stories of people who took sabbaticals that changed their lives.

race [and revive your spirit]



escape the rat race

[and revive your spirit]

Backpacking on their sabbatical, the couple met people who owned very little. “We had more than anyone else,” Todd Bruder says. “It made us stop and think, ‘Do we really need all this stuff?’”

Marjorie Williams, 41, Cambridge, Mass.

Occupation: Editorial director of the Harvard Business School Press.

What She Did: Took six months off to reevaluate her life.

How It Changed Her: She learned that she needed to take small amounts of personal time every day.

Marjorie Williams had been thinking for a while about taking some time off from work. After spending six years absorbed in a challenging job, she felt the urge to step back to gain some perspective. And then her brother, Larry, 48, died unexpectedly of a heart attack.

His death was tragic. He was married and had two young children, and Williams says it was hard to watch her mother suffer the loss of her son. “It was a painful reminder to me of how important it is to do what you really want to do in life. No one knows how long you’ll be here,” she says. She decided it was time to act.

Making It Happen

Williams loved her job and didn’t want to quit, so she decided to ask her boss for a leave of absence, something no one in her company had ever done. “I was really nervous,” Williams says. “We have such a good relationship that I was worried about letting her down. I didn’t want to seem like I was shirking my responsibility or asking for something unreasonable.” But the time off was so important to her, she says, that she was willing to quit if the answer was no.

She didn’t have to quit. After several conversations, she and her boss agreed on a six-month leave. Williams

says her boss helped her present the plan to others in the company, who all supported it. (Williams declined to say if she was paid on her leave.) She carefully prepared co-workers to share her duties while she was gone, and she agreed to come back to the office for important planning meetings during those six months.

Learning to Relax

When Williams began her sabbatical last March, she was firm about one thing: She would keep her days unstructured. “So much of my work is about results, about goals and objectives,” she says. “One of the freedoms of the time away was the chance to relax that mentality.”

She woke around 7 a.m. every day. “The last thing I wanted to do was sleep late,” she says. “Every day was a gift. I wanted to get up early to enjoy it.” Most mornings started with a walk with her husband and their dog, and then they’d linger over a cup of coffee before he left for work.

She wrote letters, went to the movies with friends, and cleaned out linen closets, activities she’d neglected while working. She practiced more yoga, visited her mother and sister, and took some short trips overseas. But she says the most

important journey of her sabbatical was an internal one.

She began meditating every day and keeping a journal. Without the pressures of work, she watched her awareness change. One day soon after her leave began, she was on a walk and suddenly heard birds singing in the trees. She was struck by how loud they were. “Before, I wouldn’t have even heard them,” she says. “I would have been distracted, probably hurrying to get to work.”

Returning to the Fast Lane

Williams’ schedule was particularly demanding when she returned to work. She was immediately offered a promotion, and on her second day back, she led a successful two-day meeting of the entire editorial staff. She was back to the hectic pace, but it felt different, thanks to some lessons she’d learned on leave.

“I used to blame my job and think it prevented me from doing things I wanted to do, if I only had the time,” she says. She went on sabbatical to get that time, “but I still didn’t do some of those things. I really had to face the fact that time is not infinite.”

Now that her leave is over, she’s making an effort to carve out more time for herself

during the week—sort of minisabbaticals—to stay connected with the relaxed, more aware person she was on leave. She’s making more of an effort to call and write to friends, waking early to meditate before work, and taking yoga classes on her lunch hour. Next time she notices the birds chirping, it won’t be such a surprise.

Time Out Marjorie Williams says the leave of absence allowed her to rediscover her interests. She spent much of her break reading.





Todd Bruder, 33, and Renee Champagne, 31, Milford, Mich.

Occupations: Engineer at General Motors and former junior high school English teacher.

What They Did: Traveled overseas for six months on a shoestring budget.

How It Changed Them: They returned with a new perspective on consumerism. "We don't have to have three TVs like the neighbor."

Todd Bruder and his wife, Renee Champagne, had talked for years about traveling overseas, but knew they couldn't see places like Africa and Australia on a two-week vacation. And both were burned out by work. Bruder had been working full-time while finishing his master's degree, and Champagne was in her fifth year of teaching junior high school English, a job she found frustrating. She needed to recharge. "It's not that I thought we would come back

to a whole new life," she says. "But I was hoping a trip like this would inspire me."

They decided to request sabbaticals. Bruder admits he was hesitant. He didn't know anyone at his company who had done this before.

Making It Happen

To their surprise, both of them were granted leave. To make up for the six months of salary they'd be missing, they began saving money; they made the trip a priority and held off on all purchases like clothing and household appliances. Next, they researched their trip. They built an itinerary that would take them mainly to Third World countries, which they chose to satisfy their desire for adventure and because they were less expensive than other places.

They also found a renter for their house and put their belongings in storage. They sold one of their cars and put the money in the trip fund, prepaid their student loans and a credit card, and purchased six months of

continued on page 122

you can do it

A SABBATICAL SOUNDS GREAT. YOU may say, but you could never do it. Wrong, says Hope Dlugozima of Atlanta, co-author of *Six Months Off* (Henry Holt, 1996), who profiled 200 sabbatical-takers for her book. "These were just ordinary people with ordinary obligations," she says. "Not one trust fund among them." Here are some of the secrets she learned about making a leave of absence work.

■ **Outsmart your fears.** Don't think of the sabbatical as an unreachable goal. "It's like the old joke: How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time," Dlugozima says. Break the process into manageable steps: How will I talk my boss into it? How will I afford it? Successful leave-takers tackle their apprehensions one by one, she says.

■ **Gather intelligence.** Ask around your company. Has anyone ever taken a leave? Read your employee handbook to see if there's a policy in place.

■ **Know thy boss.** Before you talk to her, make a list of every objection she might have and how you'll respond to it. When you meet, emphasize that you like the company and see yourself there for a long time. (She's likely to be nervous that you won't come back.) Go in with a solid plan: Give your boss definite start and end dates, and describe how you'll arrange for things to run smoothly while you're gone.

■ **Be creative about paying for it.** Dlugozima estimates that there are 50,000 grants and fellowships out there suitable for someone taking a leave. She adds that many companies will help you pay for it if you just ask. (That's how she paid for her own sabbatical to Prague.) You can also save for it. Put away \$50 a week and you'll have \$2,600 in a year. "And that could pay for three months in Portugal," she says.

■ **Trade income for time.** You usually trade your time and labor for money. Instead, trade income for time. "If your boss offers you a big raise or bonus, ask for two months off instead," Dlugozima says. "Or volunteer for a huge, time-consuming project with the stipulation that you receive a big chunk of time off afterward."



Happy Birthday, Natural Health!

"Natural Health is a pioneering publication, providing information and inspiration for the growing number of people interested in improving their health using natural and holistic methods. Thank you, *Natural Health*, for keeping the faith."

—CHRISTIANE NORTHRUP, M.D.
assistant clinical professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Vermont College of Medicine in Burlington, Vt.

Natural Health



A Better Way Since 1971

**LOOK FOR OUR
SPECIAL 30TH ANNIVERSARY
ISSUE ON NEWSSTANDS
FEBRUARY 13, 2001.**

Escape the Rat Race

continued from page 73

health insurance. They also opened a joint checking account with Champagne's mother so she could take care of unexpected bills.

They were nervous. What if the renter ruined their house? What if they became seriously ill while traveling? But they plowed ahead. "We knew if we had the gumption to go through with this, the trip would be amazing," Champagne says.

The Journey

After six months of planning, they set out in October 1997. They went on a safari in Africa and hiked with bleeding blisters in the Himalayas. They sailed under a full moon in the Whitsunday Islands near Australia and ate succulent pink watermelon on a tropical beach in Thailand. They also met people who owned very little and began to admire the simplicity of this way of life. They were embarrassed to be carrying so much in their backpacks. "We had more than anyone else," Bruder says. "It made us stop and think, 'Do we really need all this stuff?'"

They were homesick at times, especially around the holidays. But they say the six-month trip affected them in a way that a two-week vacation can't. "For the first month and a half, we felt like we were just on an extended vacation," Bruder says. "But something changed at two months. We reached a whole other level of relaxation, of interest and enjoyment. Our jobs no longer existed."

A Time for Change

As their trip drew to an end, Champagne decided she would resign from her teaching job and go back to school full-time for a master's degree in school counseling. She was granted funding for her degree, in part because of the trip. "They wanted to hear all about it," she says. "I think they were impressed that the countries we chose weren't the easiest to get around in."

Bruder's colleagues were also eager to hear stories and see photos. He returned to his desk feeling both laid-back and energized. That attitude was probably why he asked his supervisors to reassign him to a brand new position in the company soon after he returned. (They agreed.)

Bruder and Champagne say that their successful sabbatical gave them the confidence to change their careers. It taught them that they could live life on their own terms. They found truth in a line by writer

Anais Nin, which they still try to live by: "Life expands and contracts in proportion to one's courage."

Charlie Watts, 37, Milton, Mass.

Occupation: Communications consultant for Towers Perrin, a management consultant firm.

What He Did: Took six months off to spend more time with his children, then 2, 4, and 8.

How It Changed Him: He gained an understanding of what daily life is like for his wife and began to think of the work day as a luxury.

After six years in a demanding job, Charlie Watts realized he was reaching the end of an era as a parent. His youngest child was to head off to preschool the next year. "I was so busy and distracted when the first two were little and this felt like my last chance," Watts says. He decided to take six months off to be the primary caregiver for his kids.

Sabbaticals aren't common at his company, but Watts says his supervisor was very supportive. In fact, some people were downright impressed. "They would say 'Oh, wow. That's so great,' like it was some heroic thing," Watts says. But he adds that he shouldn't get congratulations. "Men get a lot of credit for doing things that women have done for thousands of years. To me, it was a real luxury to be able to afford to do this."

Making It Happen

His leave wasn't paid, so Watts took a loan from his retirement plan to finance it. In the weeks leading up to his leave, he carefully prepared colleagues to take over his clients.

But he admits he didn't plan as well with his wife, who usually stays home with the children. Watts was serious about wanting to be their main caregiver; on the first morning of his leave, he told his wife she should go somewhere else for the day. She was floored. "We had several weeks of renegotiating," he says. "She didn't suddenly want to abandon the kids. So we were both at home at first. The kids got used to me being around and messing things up, and she began increasingly to explore her own stuff." As the weeks passed, she spent more time painting and drawing (a talent she'd neglected while caring for the kids) and increased her volunteer work at a local hospice.

Time with the Kids

Watts says his children were a bit suspicious of his methods. "They did a bit of the 'Well, Mom wouldn't do that.'" It was true; his wife let the kids work independently, but Watts threw himself into activities like his son's homework. "I drove him a little crazy," he says. "I was way too involved at first."

But the leave strengthened his relationship with the children. He grew closer to his middle child, Isabel. "I had been alien to her, not surprisingly," he says. "She was 4 at the time, and I realized that I was sort of too loud. I overwhelmed her. So I spent a lot of time focusing on her, and I think she's a lot more comfortable with me now." He also developed a closeness to his youngest son, Isaac, the soon-to-be preschooler, that he hadn't felt with his older children. As babies, they turned to their mother if they were upset, Watts says. "Isaac's different. He'll call out to me as much as to my wife. And as he learns to write, he has this word for both of us, Momdad. All his paintings from school are for Momdad."

Those six months also reset his body clock. Before his leave, Watts's schedule was to come home from work for dinner and bedtime with the kids, and then return to the office from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. "I'm not a person who sleeps much, so it was convenient for me, but it really bothered my wife to have me in downtown Boston at 2 a.m." During his leave, Watts says he was often in bed by 9 p.m. "I realized the value of resting."

When Work Is a Luxury

When he returned to work, Watts says the workday felt almost easy. "You get to see what the luxuries of work are," he says. "Being at home with little kids is so much driving and errands and all that stuff. It was such a luxury to actually decide what I wanted to do for the next hour." Two years after his leave, he's back to working some long hours. But his sabbatical led him to set up a home office so he can handle late-night work from there.

Sometimes during evaluations supervisors will look back over his career and claim that the year he took leave doesn't count. After all, he was only at the office for half the year, they say. But Watts has no regrets. "If I can afford it, I'll do it again in four more years," he says. ■

Erin O'Donnell is a senior editor at *Natural Health* magazine.

Super Anti-Oxidants



Pycnogenol®

50 times more effective than Vitamin E

Imagine what this Super Anti-Oxidant can do for your skin! Derma-E Pycnogenol® moisturizing gel and creme is blended with Vitamins E, C & A. Pycnogenol aids in rebuilding Collagen, is a natural sunscreen against UVB rays, reduces inflammation (great for puffiness around eyes), and protects the skin from free radical damage. Your skin will be smoother, younger and healthier looking with visible signs of aging, fine lines, wrinkles, and other skin irregularities diminished.

FREE 1/4 oz. Sample

Send \$4.95 shipping & handling to: Derma-E 9751 Independence Ave., Chatsworth, Ca 91311
800-933-9344 / www.derma-e.com

NH11/12.00

Circle #121; Page 137▲

Before Fortius' Old Faithful, dependability like this could only be found in national parks.



Erectile dysfunction is not a disease. Why treat it with a drug?

Erectile dysfunction is a common condition that affects up to 10% of the male population. Typical methods for counteracting this problem include everything from pharmaceutical drugs to penile implants to surgery.

Old Faithful is a safe, all-natural alternative to such costly and risky solutions. Made from a potent and effective combination of natural herbs, vitamins, minerals and the amino acid L-arginine, it has been formulated based on scientific studies^{1,2} to support the dilation of the blood vessels in the genitals, thus improving erection and sexual function.*

Old Faithful - satisfaction the way nature intended.

Available at:

Savon drugs
Oscodrug

FORTIUS
NATURAL NUTRITION

For more information:
1-888-714-4697
www.fortius.ca

¹Rowland, DL, et al., 1997. Yohimbine, erectile capacity, and sexual response in men. *Arch Sex Behav* 26(1):49-62.
²Chen, J, et al., 1999. Effect of oral administration of high dose nitric oxide donor L-arginine in men with organic erectile dysfunction. *BJU* 83(3):269-273.

*These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease.

Circle #128; Page 137▲