

# Could your holiday change your life?

*Summer break left you feeling like you want a new start? Here's how to turn that feeling into action...*

**W**hether it's the sun, sea and sangria or simply the different routine, a holiday can be just what you need to get a fresh perspective on life. And for many of us, those few days away from our everyday patterns get us thinking about how we'd really like our lives to be. Perhaps it's changing where you live, changing jobs, or even learning a new skill – while you're on holiday, it all seems so clear and easy.

All too often, though, when you get back home, your plans get pushed to the back of your mind as the hustle and bustle of daily life takes over again. But this year, it's going to be different...

## A change really is as good as a rest

It usually takes a few days of winding down to clear your mind. 'I don't usually get that feeling until day five or six,' says Kate, 35, a hospital administrator and mum of two. 'But when I do, it's really exciting.'

The reason this happens on holiday is, not only do we slow down when we're away, we also depart from our usual routine. Psychotherapist Rachel Shattock Dawson (therapyonthames.co.uk) explains: 'Any type of holiday is change – of environment, pace, place – and even the smallest change produces more change. You've tried something new, so you're more confident and receptive to trying something else.'

But, as Rachel says, these won't be new ideas: 'The seed of your idea will have been inside you for a while but pushed down by the stress of everyday life. The pace change of a holiday allows the idea to come to the surface and start growing.'

## What to do with your idea

'Most people I talk tend to have one big idea on holiday,' reveals Rachel. 'They get that "lightbulb moment" – an idea they think will change their life.' This can be anything from a job change to a new exercise regime, from confronting

relationship problems to – and this is a common one – starting a new business.

Kate knows that feeling only too well, but has never managed to put her ideas into practice. 'Last holiday, I promised myself I was going to follow my passion and start my own dog grooming business. I worked it all out as I was pottering around the holiday villa – I'd put aside one evening a week to train, use my savings to pay for it, I even knew what I was going to call my shop. But within two days of getting home, I was so busy doing the washing, catching up with work and getting the kids

back into their routines that all my plans went out the window. When, eventually, I did try to remember them, I couldn't recall the detail.'

'This is very common,' says Rachel. 'We have to lose that carefree holiday outlook pretty soon after we get back so that we can readapt to everyday

life; and, in order to cope, your brain reverts to the old way of thinking.'

So how do you keep the idea alive? Rachel advises writing your idea on a postcard and sending it to yourself. 'Jot down notes to jolt your memory,' she says, 'and choose an image such as your favourite beach or a sunset that will take you back into your holiday frame of mind.' **Now follow our 7-point plan (right)...**

### CASE STUDY 1

**'Telling my friends meant I had to go through with it!'** Sammi, 29, from Lincoln, was longing to ditch her job and train as sports masseuse. 'I was on holiday in Spain two years ago when I decided I was going to go for it. When I got back, I told all my friends – that really forced me to do something. I enrolled on a year's massage course in London – it was hard work, but I qualified last year, resigned from my job and set up my own practice. It's the best thing I've ever done.'

### CASE STUDY 2

**'I'm finally exercising every week!'** Jo, 47, from Kettering, Northants, had wanted to get fit for years. 'I'd tried cycling, running, the gym... but I always gave up. I was on holiday with my son when I realised the reason I'd never stuck with it was the types of exercise I'd chosen had no social side. My friend invited me to Zumba, and it's great – it's cheap, fun, 10 minutes away and at 8pm, so I can get the dinner done first!'

*All it took was a break to see what's wrong with my life!*

*Now I know exactly what I need to do...*

## MAKING YOUR PLAN

A study by author and psychologist Richard Wiseman found that 52% of resolution-makers were confident they'd achieve their goals, yet only 12% succeeded. Their secret? They made a plan of small but considered steps.

Once you're back home, don't feel you have to start planning on day one. Those first few days back are busy, so instead, put some time in your diary a week or so later and either ensure you have the house to yourself for a couple of hours, or head off to a coffee shop. Arm yourself with a new notebook and your diary and follow these steps:

**1** Choose one idea and write it down.

Make your plan concrete: not 'I'm going to exercise regularly', but 'I'm going to do a Race for Life next April.'

**2** Think about the past. See resolutions that haven't worked before as experience to get you nearer to your goal, rather than as failure. 'Ask yourself what was it that didn't work,' suggests Rachel. 'There will be another way.'

**3** Give yourself a deadline. When do you want to do this by? Now work backwards: what must you do each month to reach this goal?

**4** Break down to bite-size chunks. Taking on too much is one of the reasons why resolutions can fail. By accomplishing one small thing at a time, you'll stay on track.

**5** Make time. If you really want to start your own business, for example, set aside regular two-hour blocks and plan one day every month to track your progress.

**6** Tell people about it. Letting close friends or family in on your big idea is a great way to keep motivated.

**7** Learn how to clear your head. Your resolution is more likely to slip when you're busy or overwhelmed, so try to spend time every day being quiet and still. Good luck. Let us know how you get on!



new picture to come here