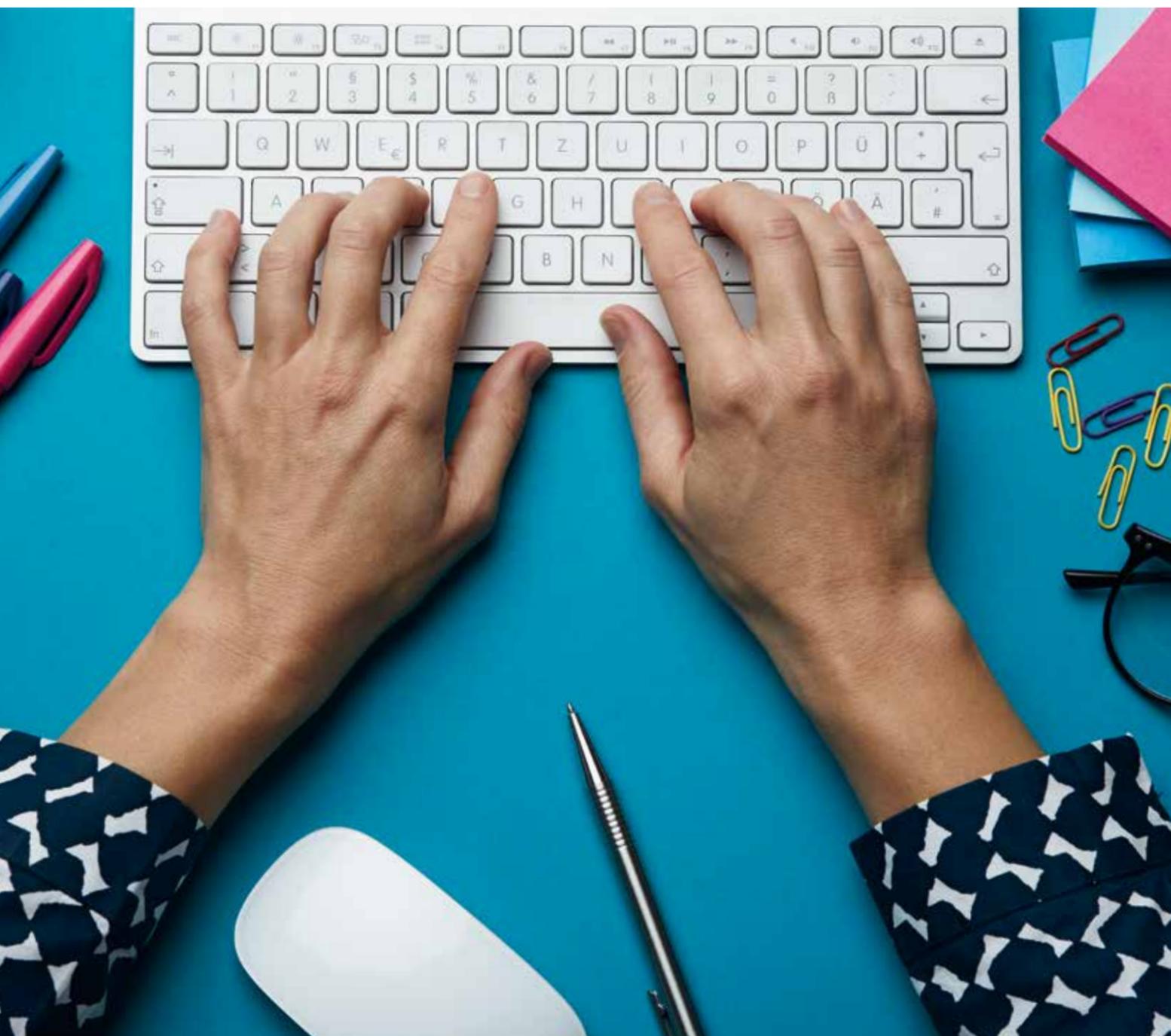# BIG BREAK

DREAMING OF SIPPING PINA COLADAS BY THE POOL, BUT FINDING IT DIFFICULT TO TAKE TIME OFF WORK? PERHAPS YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT HOW MUCH WORK YOU'LL COME BACK TO OR THE FACT THAT YOUR DEPARTMENT IS UNDERSTAFFED. WHATEVER THE CASE, HERE'S WHY YOU NEED A VACATION AND HOW TO EFFECTIVELY UNPLUG WHEN YOU'RE ON ONE

BY ERIN COE

WORKAHOLICS, listen up. We know your job is important to you, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't go on holiday every now and then. In fact, taking a break from the office is not only good for your health and well-being, it's also good for your career. 'Our capacity to do anything – that includes work or play – is finite,' explains clinical psychologist Daniel Sher. 'And in order to perform optimally, we need to occasionally disconnect from what we're doing to give our bodies and brains a chance to regenerate.' Still not convinced? Here are two reasons why you should definitely book that leave, and three ways to properly disconnect once you're out of the office.

It'll alleviate stress

It doesn't matter how much you love your job, everyone (and we mean everyone) has felt stress at some point in their careers. 'Sometimes stress can be good for you,' Daniel explains. 'It's what ensures we're motivated and functional at work.' However, if you experience stress over a prolonged period of time, it could become chronic – and this isn't good. According to career coach Penny Holburn, 'When stressed, the body secretes a hormone called cortisol. And too much cortisol results in an increased risk of heart disease, weakened immune system and digestive issues.' Suddenly wishing you'd taken those days off? Us too! 'When you unplug, even for a short while, you give your body time to relax and recover,' says Penny.

It'll enhance performance

Perhaps you're less worried about your health and more worried about your career. After all, you don't want your colleagues to have to pick up the extra work while you're away, and you certainly don't want your boss to think you're a slacker. However, according to Penny, taking time off can actually result in better performance when you return to work. 'Doing things differently for a little while will mean that you come back to the office with a fresh perspective. It's this new outlook that helps inspire creativity

and could even be the reason why you suddenly solve that problem you were struggling with before you left.' In short, you'll return refreshed and better able to do your job – and your boss will be grateful for that.

Clear your to-do list

Okay, so you've decided to take a holiday; great success! Now you just need to be able to actually enjoy it and disconnect from office life. The first step is to make sure you finish off everything you need to do before you go on holiday. 'You're not going to be able to unwind if you are worried about some unfinished work task,' says Penny. If you have to work in the evenings leading up to your holiday to get everything done, that's okay. Your future self will thank you. If there are certain things you can't finish, then delegate, delegate, delegate.

Take control of your email

Write the best, most detailed 'out of office' ever. 'Include the times you are away, that you will not be checking emails, and the details of the co-worker to contact in an emergency,' says Penny. This should give you some peace of mind that you're not leaving anyone in the lurch just because you're out of signal for a few days. If you have to check your emails, then set up a schedule in advance. Maybe you're going to check in at 10 am every morning or twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Tell your colleagues what the plan is, so they know when you're available.

Keep busy (ish)

You don't need to plan every second of your holiday, but getting stuck into activities that you enjoy will help take your mind off work. Choose what works for you. Do you enjoy reading at home, or are you more of a playing-volleyball-at-the-beach-with-friends kind of person? If you're not planning on going away at all, Penny suggests you plan a few day trips to a new area in your city. 'Trying new things and experiencing new environments will remind you that you're on holiday and will help you relax,' she

> 'I manage a variety of social-media accounts, so I find it hard to switch off over the holidays. Apart from scheduling everything ahead of time, I try to give myself some time away from my phone every day. I switch it off for most of the day, leave it in my room when going out, hide it away in my suitcase or in another room, and switch off notifications from my social-media apps. I then usually just quickly check in the morning and evening to see if the accounts are all running okay.'
>
> – Carine Visagie, **freelance journalist and content marketer, 39**

says. Daniel adds: 'When you stay at home for a holiday, you end up doing the same sort of things you would normally do to relax. As a result, your brain expects work, so you don't end up getting some proper rest. This is why planning new activities and going to new places is so important; you break the routine and your brain finally realises that you're on holiday.' You heard the experts, plan that trip! **B.**