

Getting back to the future

returning to work after a summer break....

6th Sept 2018

And we're back....

It's over. Summer came and then it went. September is here and we're winding the engines back up to full speed. School starts again for many young people around the world, and that means back to the domestic routines of full on parenting alongside full on working. And even if the young ones have flown the nest, or there never was a nest, there is still a sense of getting back to it, whatever the "it" that we tried to leave behind - the stressful boss, the awkward colleague, the impossible project the challenging client, and the unsettled staff. We put them on hold, along with our own efforts to improve our day to day experience of work, and our attempts to imagine a better future. We needed a break, a time to switch off ("there's a time for everything" says Ecclesiastes), a chance to re-group, and now, in the blink of an eye, our (not so) old difficulties return. And with them, come the same thoughts, the same feelings, and the same behaviours we used to deal with them before - some of them working like a dream, and some of them making not a jot of difference.

Many of us look forward to the slow down of August. Often considered the quietest month of the year, it's the time when many of us try to get away for a summer break (or a winter break if you're in the southern hemisphere). And even if you didn't manage to get away this year, the chances are a good number of the people you work with did, which made your life quieter in the office and which makes the first week in the September all the more of a shock to the system. Unfortunately, the system is used to such shocks. There are important and noticeable rhythms to the way we "do work". Starting up, gaining momentum, reaching a peak, slowing down, re-charging are all part of the natural pattern of work on a daily, weekly, quarterly, and even annual basis. Unless we interfere with the energy cycle, forcing more speed when everything in us is trying to put the brakes on, and vice-versa. As well as an energy gradient, building up and down, there is also "on" and "off", and in this digital age, someone has messed with the off-switch and so basically, we can easily find ourselves "always on". And even if August represented some measure of off, we now find ourselves very much on again.

Holidays are good for us

Paula Coccozza describes a 40 year longitudinal study from Finland that tracked the lives of 1,200 businessmen at risk of heart disease. Researchers found that those who took three or fewer weeks of holiday a year were more than one-third more likely to die young. The good news for those on a budget, says Coccozza, the benefits (of the holidays) were just the same "whether you were in a holiday resort or just at home. She goes on to say that immediately after a holiday (like about NOW) is the perfect time to make changes to your routine. "The plasticity in your brain - its ability to change and adapt to experiences - will be freshly stimulated by a combination of novel experience

and physical activity and ready for the idea of positive change" So if you want to keep the holiday spirit alive, here are 18 ways that Cocozza suggests you can continue to benefit.

So, as you get back onto your regular train, take your regular route to work, or make your way downstairs into your home office at an earlier time again, you might like to consider a fresh start. A new way of dealing the some of the same old challenges. Some new thinking and greater curiosity around what is really going on here. And some new resolves to make new commitments, and to turn those commitments into action!