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# 'French Women' author: Take a vacay, America!

By Mireille Guiliano, special to HLN  
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**NEED TO KNOW**

- Author Mireille Guiliano says taking time off work is crucial for our well-being
- She says a lengthy vacation de-stresses and re-energizes us
- Her perfect vacay length? Three weeks!



**Editor's note:** *Mireille Guiliano is the author of "Women, Work & the Art of Savoir Faire" and "French Women Don't Get Fat." She is a big proponent of achieving a great work-life balance and left for les grandes vacances (an extended vacation in Provence until Labor Day) right after writing this article.*

Why take a vacation? Never pose this question to a French woman with up to five weeks off a year who wouldn't

even think of not taking every day of that time (well, a few don't take it all, for various reasons).

For the French, vacation is a measure of time that shapes our year. Implicit is the deep belief in the need to recharge our batteries and that self-indulgent "play" is a psychological necessity for well-being.

Vacation is cultural, sacred even in *la belle* France and we all not only feel entitled to our long breaks—we take them very seriously. So leaving any vacation time on the table does not even go through our minds. Neither does the thought that we may not be missed and thus lose our job, as is often [the case in the U.S.](#)

In France, we don't really count long weekends as a vacation. For us, the basic rule of vacation is you need the first week to disconnect, the second to adapt and the third to refresh, refuel and replenish.

When I hear people say they don't need that much vacation, they are often telling the same people who feel they don't need breakfast or a good night's sleep (6-8 hours). It is now recognized that with the stress and traps of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, [our immune systems are weakened](#), and we feel both overstressed and fatigued.

Companies in most developed countries are starting to understand that we need to slow down and the benefits of vacation can translate into a lot of [pluses both at work and at home](#).

When our bodies relax, our minds calm down simultaneously. Rest and relaxation put stress at a distance. The little moments when we do nothing, dream, or read a book bring energy, vitality and enrich our minds. They recharge us.

Vacation is also meant to allow our sleep cycles to live their lives and to balance our meals. So to be on vacation is to listen to all those messages so we can face the return to work with physical vitality, emotional flexibility and intellectual freshness—the key to being "*bien dans sa peau*" comfortable in your own skin.

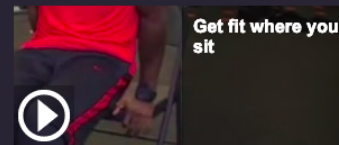
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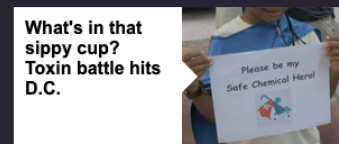
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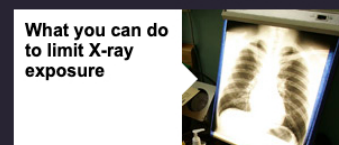
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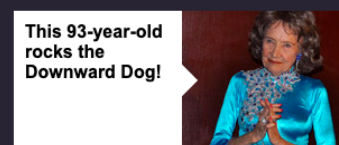
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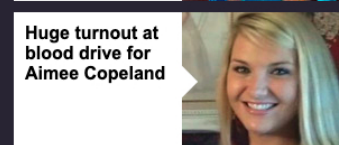
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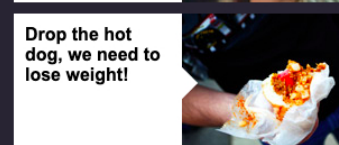
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