

Travelling is good for our health and wellbeing

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Travelling is good for us

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By Dr Brighton Chireka

Growing up in the rural villages of Zimbabwe, I used to get excited when a trip to visit the capital city, Harare, was being arranged. The night before the trip would be very long as the excitement will be overwhelming. I would be the first one to wake up and be ready to travel before my elders were even awake. The thought of travelling brought happiness and excitement to me.

Studies have shown that travelling offers health benefits to our mind , body and soul. We have all travelled and we can attest to the excitement that comes from being in a new environment. Travelling is not only exciting, it offers health benefits which I will cover below.

Travelling promotes the health of our heart

As a child the day of travelling would see us walking to the bus stop which was a few miles away . The rushing to the bus stops and now through airports as well walking on beaches promote physical activity. Physical activity lowers blood pressure and the risk of heart disease and stroke. Framingham heart study found that women who vacationed only every six years or less were nearly 8 times more likely to develop heart disease or have a heart attack compared to women who travelled at least twice a year. I would suggest that we must take a holiday at least twice a year to stay healthy.

Many companies are generous as they allow most of their workers at least 4 weeks of paid annual leave. Let us not use that time to go and do another job. We must use that time to travel and in the process improve our health.

Let's have time for a good sleep when travelling

<http://docbeecee.co.uk/lets-talk-about-sleep-problems/>

Travelling is good for our mind

As we travel our brain is challenged by new environments and new experiences. This will increase cognitive stimulation and has been shown to improve both our memory and concentration. We know that staying mentally active is as important as staying physically active. We stay mental active by travelling as we meet new people , cultures , situations and experiences which will help our mental wellbeing. It is also advisable to visit different locations and not stick to the same spot every year. Our brain will benefit from the different activities associated with the new locations we may visit each year.

Most of us in the diaspora tend to just go back to Zimbabwe and visit the same locations. We are denying ourselves some of the benefits that are associated with traveling to new places. It is cheaper and also good for our brain if we travel to some nice places in Europe or America as well

as in other African countries.

Travelling relieves our stress levels

We all get stressed at times and struggle to carry on with our lives. The routine of our lives may be making us more stressed and putting ourselves out of that daily routine and see new environment will relief that stress. Travelling has been noted to relief our stress according to a 2012 Expedia survey. The survey found that 89% of travellers could let go of stress and just relax only a day or two into their trip. No more excuses that we do not have time because having something to look forward to, even if it's a two or three-day trip can feel rewarding. The mere panning of a vacation boost our morale as we look forward to the things that we will be doing on holiday. Further studies have shown that travelling can lower levels of depression and improve our mental wellbeing.

We sometimes overwork ourselves which is not good for our health. Studies have shown that workers who take time off are more productive, have higher morale and are less likely to be stressed or burnout. Those that have been on holiday will agree with me that we experience less stress and we are more satisfied with our mood and outlook after returning from a trip compared to non- travellers.

Do not overwork yourselves

<http://docbeecee.co.uk/overworking/>

We are not worse off

When we are stuck in our usual environment we tend to feel bad about our situations. We tend to imagine that our personal problems are the worst in the world. When we travel we may see people who are worse off than us. This will make us realise that our problems are not as bad as we previously thought. This will help in lowering any stress or depression that may be affecting us. We will learn to value what we have in our lives and that will promote our mental wellbeing and stop us from being anxious and worry over little things.

Have time to eat some good food as well

<http://docbeecee.co.uk/healthy-eating/>

Travelling improves bonding with our loved ones

I will digress a bit on the issue of bonding with our loved ones. The family is the engine room that

sustain us. It is the taproot that provides us with all the "nutrients" that we need to manage our daily life activities. We must have time to travel with our family and make the most out of it .

Our lives are so busy that at times we do not have enough time for our families and friends. We need to create time for our families as they are very important to us. Family is the people we depend upon. They know us better than anyone else and we can call on them whenever we need a hand. Before we have friends , teachers , colleagues and partners , we have family. Spending time with our family will make us realise our own strengths and weaknesses. We learn how to support each other. However and whenever we need them, the people we call family will be there – but it takes effort.

We need to build the bonds from an early age by setting aside time for the family. It's not only about travelling together , it also include things that we take for granted such as eating dinner together every night .It's easy to think 'we see each other all the time, we can do it another time', but once you fall out of the routine it's much harder to schedule it back in there. Remember that this is not time you get to opt out of. Take time to have a one- on-one when you are on holiday and also try to find things that you all enjoy.

We need to be "present when travelling with family"

We are now good at multi-tasking in our busy lives, but when we are spending quality time travelling with family we need to stop answering phones or checking emails or posting on social media. If you have children remember that you are their role model . Every move you take is being watched . If we spend all the time on the phone during family vacation then we are giving them the impression that they can pull out their hand held games and not participate in family activities. As our children grow they must know that if they are in trouble they can talk to us. By being there from the beginning means they are more likely to come to you when they really need your help.

I hope that after reading this article you will be called to action and go ahead in booking that long overdue vacation. Enjoy your vacation and make the most out of it .

Please do leave me a comment telling me how travelling has enhanced your life and your health . This article was compiled by **Dr Brighton Chireka** , who is a GP and a blogger based in Kent in the United Kingdom. Feel free to contact him at info@docbeecee.co.uk and you can read more of

his work on his blog at [DR CHIREKA'S BLOG](#)

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