

Three research-based ways to maximize the fun of leisure activities

July 2 2018, by Jeff Grabmeier



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Everyone's so busy these days that it is easy to think you need to schedule time to have fun.

But be careful about how you do that, said Selin Malkoc, a time management expert at The Ohio State University's Fisher College of Business.

Research shows that scheduling can undermine enjoyment if it is not done right, according to Malkoc, an associate professor of marketing.

In an invited article in the journal *Current Opinion in Psychology*, she and Gabriela Tonietto of Rutgers Business School evaluated recent research that shows how people can find time for leisure and still keep it fun.

They recommended three keys:

Schedule more roughly. In a study they published last year, Malkoc and Tonietto found that scheduling leisure activities makes them less fun because the strict beginning and end times disrupted their free-flowing nature.

"The minute you put limits on a fun activity, you're robbing yourself of some of the enjoyment," she said.

Malkoc recommends that if you have to [schedule](#) leisure, do it only roughly. Say you'll do it "after work" rather than "at 6 p.m." Allowing a little wiggle room alleviates the restriction one feels.

Avoid hard stops. Don't schedule something to do immediately after a leisure activity—even if it is another enjoyable event.

"You're always looking at the clock and feel like you have less time to enjoy the first activity. You are dreading the fun ending and having to do the next thing on your schedule," she said.

In one study, for example, participants expected a desirable activity (a

massage) would be less enjoyable if it occurred before another scheduled activity (meeting friends).

Focus on the now. Even when there is no [time](#) pressure, the mere knowledge of upcoming activities may lessen your enjoyment of what you're doing now.

"Your mind wanders to the next event," Malkoc said. "What you're doing now can be seen as just a way to get to the next [activity](#), and not as fun in itself."

For instance, participants in one study enjoyed a comedic video less when they knew they would watch another enjoyable video, compared to those who didn't know what they were doing afterward.

"The key to enjoying your [leisure](#) activities is to live in the moment as much as possible. Be spontaneous and don't live by the calendar," she said.

More information: Selin A Malkoc et al. Activity versus outcome maximization in time management, *Current Opinion in Psychology* (2018). [DOI: 10.1016/j.copsyc.2018.04.017](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2018.04.017)

Provided by The Ohio State University

Citation: Three research-based ways to maximize the fun of leisure activities (2018, July 2) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-07-research-based-ways-maximize-fun-leisure.html>

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