

Did you miss me? I spent last week on furlough: a break I knew I needed, but didn't realize just how much until I found myself under the sun, drifting on my board at a tiny surf break not too far from home. I surf mediocly, but it is one of my passions; as COVID-19 dissolved into the Pacific for a brief moment, I felt like I was on a wonderful vacation rather than on furlough in the middle of a pandemic. For a few days, those waves and hikes brought a sense of normalcy back to my life during these complicated times. While furlough gave me the push to leave my office and take a break, I realized just how essential it is that we all get some rest and recovery during this time, regardless of our roles.

We will all have different experiences of furlough and different opportunities to leverage these weeks in support of our well-being: whether that means getting out for some fresh air, curling up with a new bestseller or falling in love all over again with a favorite hobby. I had the good fortune to take my first week of furlough after a couple colleagues and friends had already completed theirs, and they were kind enough to share their wisdom with me. With their blessing, I'm happy to pass it on to you in the hopes that if you are cycling into furlough weeks in the coming months, you will find it as helpful to your experience as I did.

### **Thoughts on furlough:**

Even though we may understand the budget realities, getting a furlough letter didn't feel good. "The news of a furlough was hard—I understood with my head, but not my heart. Initially, I felt angry and hurt especially because the last several months I was working nonstop and trying my best to get all the support to all the people. It also shook my feeling of job security a bit and that was scary. However, after a few good talks with friends and colleagues and some time I felt more accepting of it and honestly was ready for a break."

Furlough brings a variety of emotions and reactions: the first week was "a challenge and a gift."

The stress of the last several months, coupled with "the tireless hours of work leading up to [furlough] made it challenging to relax completely. Even with intentional self-care it took about 4 days for me to unwind."

Colleagues encouraged me to "be aware that you may have varying emotions at this time," and that it is "normal to go through different stages from acceptance to anger."

As a bright spot, we learned that it is OK to disconnect more often, that “the world isn’t going to stop spinning” if we step away.

**Tips for furlough:**

- “Carve out some time to be alone with yourself, without distractions. Try to find comfort in the stillness. **Get outside**. Do things that bring you joy to refill your bucket so we can continue to care for and support others.”
- “**Don’t expect yourself to be productive**, just take the time to rest and recharge.”
- Consider taking your work email off of your phone, and **taking time to disconnect from technology**. “I created some new habits of not taking my phone with me to bed and am trialing not checking email until I get in the office, which feels really good!”
- Take a couple days off before attempting to navigate the unemployment site. It is not very easy to navigate and feels like a lot of work. Since you have until the end of the week to make your claim, give yourself a couple of days of break before navigating the online forms.

My biggest recommendation is to take a small trip during the weekdays if you are able. This could be as close as a city park, or as robust as a campout in the Puget Sound — just take advantage of the less crowded days outdoors if you can. [#RecreateResponsibly](#), a national coalition to support getting outdoors safely, has developed recommendations for travel and time outdoors with helpful tips to protect the communities you may pass through. Be aware that getting outside of Seattle and into communities in different phases may feel jarring. Please mask no matter where you are to protect others and yourself.

**Lastly, a huge thanks to Uber** who, as part of their commitment to distribute 10 million discounted rides and food deliveries to healthcare workers, seniors and people in need, donated \$125,000 in rides to UW Medicine. With Uber’s donation, we were able to support the commutes of 500 of our colleagues whose income reaches the threshold for receiving emergency aid.

As we look out at the horizon, we see continued challenges from COVID-19 emerging near and far. If you can take advantage of this moment to take a break and disconnect from work — whether required by furlough or not — please find your equivalent of bobbing in the Pacific Ocean to reset so we can refill our own buckets before we return and continue to care for and support others.

With gratitude,

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