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Benefits of Three-Day Weekends

Thesis: Three-day weekends would be more beneficial than two-day weekends because it gives the American people more time to destress, recover, and prioritize life outside of work.

Weekends never seem to be long enough! Sometimes it's hard to always feel like you are being productive, or maybe it may feel as if you can never get all your work done during the weekend. Many people are forced to spend the weekend running errands or doing chores, while rarely having the chance to rest or go out and socialize. We should focus on using the weekends as a well-needed break from the weekday stressors. It seems as if life just never stops, and it would be good to have a moment to relax, refresh, and refuel for the upcoming week. It is important to remind ourselves of the importance of recovery, mental health, and the benefits of having a social life. Three-day weekends could improve the lives of American workers, students, and society rather than the traditional two-day weekend. Having a long weekend can allow time to de-stress and figure out how to lessen the workload of the upcoming week.

Why is recovery important? This may seem like a broad question, but it can be simplified into three simple answers. You lessen the likelihood of feeling burned-out, you can become more focused if you have energy, and you have a better chance of improving your mental health. What is burnout? Well, "Burnout is a form of exhaustion caused by constantly feeling swamped. It's a

result of excessive and prolonged emotional, physical, and mental stress.” (WebMD, 2020) A longer recovery period allows more time to sleep, de-stress, and prioritize health. Having a long weekend allows you to have an extra day to get rid of weekday stressors. This allows you to become more productive and have more energy to become more focused.

In the article *Embracing Work Breaks: Recovery from Work Stress*, the authors go into detail about the benefits of recovery. “Employees who do not completely recover during the weekend...are at an increased risk for depressive symptoms, fatigue, energy loss, and cardiovascular disease.” (Demskey, 2013) Just as important is to complete your responsibilities and tasks, it is important to take care of yourself and your health, whether that is physical health or mental health, or both. When the traditional two-day weekend ends, people often feel as if they didn’t complete as much work as they needed to, often feeling burned out. Which, as a result, makes those dread the new week. Sometimes, many people feel even *more* tired when the weekend is over. With many workplaces having long working hours and limited vacation days, finding time to effectively recover is very important. Some ways you can physically recover during your weekend would be getting more sleep, drink more water, or even go get a massage.

Firstly, finding a good sleeping schedule is vital for one's health and a really good key to finding some stability. Sleeping is super important for one's health and wellbeing. “Keeping a regular sleep schedule—even on weekends—maintains the timing of the body's internal clock and can help you fall asleep and wake up more easily.” (WGBH, 2008) Some ways that you can maintain a good sleeping schedule during the weekend would be going to bed at the same time that you do during your week. “Being consistent reinforces your body's sleep-wake cycle.” (Mayo Clinic, 2020) Maintaining a sleep routine makes your day-to-day tasks easier. Secondly, drinking water is important for peak health. Many of us forget to drink the ideal 8-cups of water

per day, meaning that most are not recovering to their full potential. Lack of water can cause dehydration, hallucinations, mood changes, and even migraines. Lastly, some of the benefits of getting a massage is that they can increase relaxation levels, reduce muscle pain and soreness, and helps improve body circulation. They can be reminders to take your health seriously and also to enjoy taking the time to do something relaxing and recover.

Sleeping is extremely important for one's health and wellbeing. It gives you time to refuel and refresh and gives you a break from your day-to-day tasks. Getting good, quality sleep can help improve your physical health, mental health, and in the long run, your quality of life. Some ways that you can improve your sleeping habits would be getting some exercise during the day, trying to be consistent with your sleeping schedule, and trying to eliminate electronics from your bedroom. Ways that a three-day weekend can help more than a two-day weekend is having more time to exercise during the day. During the week, many people are going to work or taking care of responsibilities and it can be hard to find time to exercise during the day. During the weekend, these same people might choose to take on other responsibilities like errands and chores and consider exercise to be their last priority. Not only does a three-day weekend benefit you by giving you more time to sleep, but it gives you more time to exercise which can help benefit your sleep. Another way that we can improve our sleep would be by finding a consistent sleeping schedule. During the weekdays, often people choose to go to sleep earlier to try and be more prepared for their upcoming day. However, some choose to stay up during the weekend to compensate for their earlier nights during the weekend. People choose to stay up late socializing and wanting to have more free time. A three-day weekend can help improve your consistency because you can use an extra day to socialize with friends and family, giving yourself the afternoons to possibly go to sleep at a more normal time. Lastly, one last way you can improve

your sleeping recovery is by eliminating electronics from the bedroom. If you use your time during the day to relax, you can find it easier to just want to go to bed and get rid of the electronics in your room. This will not only help your sleeping habits but will also help you become more productive with your time management.

It is also important to recognize the difference between recovery activities and recovery experiences. In the article written by Demsky, she mentions that recovery activities are what you do to recover, but recovery activities are how you feel when you do these recovery activities. It is important to not just go through the motions with your recovery but to take it all in and truly feel relaxed and in a good peaceful state. You could try and watch a movie to recover, however, if you are thinking about things that stress you out and are worried about your responsibilities, you will not feel peaceful after you finish your movie. You may seem to find that you feel even more worried because you “wasted” your time watching the movie when you could have been taking on the task that you need to do. Three-day weekends can help you feel recovered by giving you an extra day to finish your tasks and responsibilities. By doing responsibilities ahead of time, you can use the extra time you have to do a recovery activity to truly feel recovered.

Mental health is just as important as recovery, in fact, these two subjects come hand in hand. Mental illnesses have never been more common than in today's day and age. Society is finally recognizing that mental illnesses are a serious concern and should be treated accordingly. Workplace mental health should be addressed, as it is a big stressor in many people's lives. With long work hours and few breaks, many employees feel burnout and feel stress. It is important to take time to recover and find ways to improve your mentality about working. In the article, *“Workplace Mental Health: Developing an Integrated Approach”*, the authors talked about ways to prevent harm, promote positivity, and the benefits of managing mental illness. A good first

step that you can take when addressing mental illness would be limiting exposure to job stressors. If you had one less day of working in the week, this would lead to less exposure to job stressors, and also allow more time during the weekend to recover from the job stressors. Finding time to recover effectively can also lead to a more positive work environment.

Promoting positivity to your mental health can lead to positivity in the workplace, which will make working more enjoyable in the long run. By destigmatizing mental illness, it promotes mental health! If people recognized that we are all human and all have stressors, it will become more normal and make working much more enjoyable. Giving employees an extra day to recover and focus on themselves and not their weekday stressors, makes them healthier and happier. Not only does this happen in the workplace, but in schools and universities as well. Many students feel the effects of burnout quite early. If we normalize taking breaks and balancing your life with your responsibilities, this will benefit them and teach them that it is okay to take personal time to learn about stress management.

“Wellbeing is more than the absence of ill-health but the presence of positive feelings and functioning.” (LaMontagne, 2014) By taking time to find hobbies and things that will promote happiness, that is when it is possible to reach a well-being state. With two-day weekends, many try to cram in as many errands and don’t take time to actually enjoy the break. Rather than focusing on themselves and recovery, they focus on their responsibilities and ignore recovering. It is important to have a life balance, finding happiness outside of work is vital for personal growth. Taking time to try new things, go on vacation, and spend time with family and friends is good.

Two things that can help you recover on the weekends, would be finding new hobbies and spending time with friends and family. It is important to find a balance between working and

having a social life. Personal relationships allow you to have a more rounded lifestyle and allow you to not put all your eggs in one basket. This is important because it allows you a break from weekday stressors. Having these relationships will improve your mental health, but it can also improve your physical health. In an article about social connections, “*Social Relationships and Health: A Flashpoint for Health Policy*,” they talk about the three aspects of social ties' influence on health. The authors, Umberson and Montez, inform about the behavioral, psychosocial, and physiological benefits of social relationships. The behavioral benefits of social relationships can help create concern about others. This can help physically because it creates relationships and health concerns for others and in return health concerns back towards you. It makes it so that you can have support on both sides of the relationship. These benefits can help improve healthy habits, mental health, and physical health. Social benefits allow you to cherish your time and create relationships with others, which in the end can create a supportive environment. “For instance, the emotional support provided by social ties enhances psychological well-being, which, in turn, may reduce the risk of unhealthy behaviors and poor physical health” (Umberson and Montez, 2010).

Other countries that have implemented the standard of a three-day weekend. “If you lived in The Netherlands you would be a few hours from the weekend right now...The four-day workweek is "nearly standard" in the country of 17 million people” (Jackson, 2015) This helps the Netherlands because it allows its citizens to rest and prioritize their mental health. Another country that has also wanted to prioritize the well being of its people is Belgium. “Belgium is the latest country to not only introduce a 4-day workweek, but also gives employees the right to ignore work-related messages and turn off work devices after work hours.” (Dey, 2022) They went above and beyond when it comes to allowing free time and freedom of living.

Overall, three-day weekends are more impactful to our lives because they allow more time for us to recover. Recovery is vital for American society because there are rarely any breaks. Recovery is important because it helps with burnout and feeling and becoming more productive. Recovery is also important because it helps you to improve your mental health. It is good to rest and take breaks so that you can refuel and come back more focused. Three-day weekends give you more time to figure out and improve your mental health and give time to become more in tune with yourself. Lastly, three-day weekends are better than two-day weekends because they allow you to build social skills and gain social relationships. Three-day weekends allow for an extra day of recovery, which you can use to build friendships and create social balance in your life. They allow us to go out and create a more meaningful life because we will have more time to spend with friends and family.

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