

Just because I've been on holiday doesn't mean I have to be happy

'Holiday hangover', 'back-to-work blues', 'post-travel depression' – it's a well-known condition, and I'm suffering from it.

My cat. My tortoise. My friends. My bed. The list reads the same every time, but I still write it. I write it on the last day of every holiday, to convince myself that going home isn't so bad. Then I feel utterly miserable. There are plenty of things I'm not great at – driving, maths, returning library books on time – but the thing I'm worst at is coming back to work after a holiday.

It's an extreme case of being selfishly miserable. To have had a lovely sunshine break and then return to the office, where everyone has been working hard without restaurant lunches or morning swims, with a face like thunder is terribly bad manners. (1)..... Given the number of names for it – 'holiday hangover', 'back-to-work blues', 'post-travel depression' – it's a well-known condition.

In a recent survey conducted by a travel website, 82 per cent of the 1,254 people asked experienced post-holiday misery. (2)..... Probably just before they logged on to a job vacancy website or started fantasising about retraining for work in the countryside.

Even if you manage to avoid end-of-holiday panic, and you feel refreshed, relaxed and ready to face the world of work, you're guaranteed to walk into stress, conflict and injustice. (3)..... Or the surprise departmental reorganisation that took place while you were away.

Still, it could be worse. Over three-quarters of people questioned said that their holiday depression lasted for a month. (4)..... Perhaps they should have saved their cash and not bothered going.

After years of practice, I've come up with a few things that help. A bit. The first is the list mentioned above. (5)..... Unlike some people I know, I can't just roll off an intercontinental flight and roll in to the office. The third is concentrating on getting through the first day back at work without running away, making a grand

plan for a new life or spending (too much) time on my own tearfully looking at my holiday photos saying to myself: 'I can't believe this is my life.'

I feel sorry for my poor colleagues having to look at my long face today, but at least by having my break now I'm getting my bad mood in early. (6)..... Then I can support them in their hour (month?) of need. I might even lend them one of my pets.

- A** By September, on the other hand, when the schools go back and the main summer-holiday season is over, I'll be back to normal.
- B** The most content, with both their home and working life, appear to be those who stay at home all summer.
- C** For instance, that highly important task you left with a colleague that's been ignored and later caused your email inbox to turn toxic.
- D** At least, though, I'm not the only fed-up wage slave to feel like this.
- E** The next one is making sure I have a day off everything between getting home and going to work.
- F** Also, over two-thirds of them answered the next question, 'Are you usually glad to be home after a holiday abroad?' with a – presumably unhappy sounding – 'No'.
- G** Longer by at least a fortnight, I'd guess, than the holiday they'd taken.