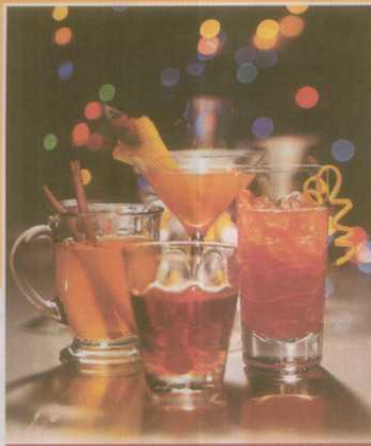


BRUNCH

Nine to Five

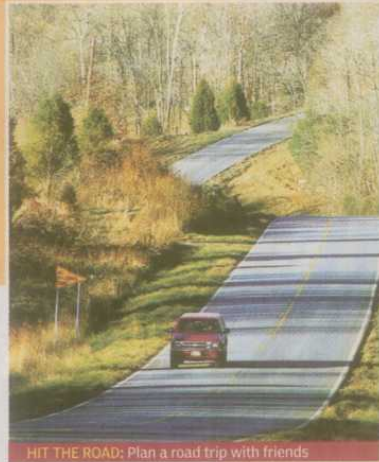


PUB CRAWL: Meet friends after work for a drink

Get a LIFE

Bogged down with work, many of us don't have the energy to make time for friends. Here's why you must

by Colleen Braganza



HIT THE ROAD: Plan a road trip with friends

YOU'VE JUST got home after a long day at work, changed into your comfortable home clothes, made yourself a cup of tea and are looking forward to an evening of leisure – a book or movie and you – when your phone rings. 'Hey, do you want to go for a movie?' asks a good friend you haven't seen in weeks.

You groan. This is the first time in weeks you left office early enough to get some quiet time at home, so you squeal 'nooooo, I've just changed.'

'Never mind,' says the friend. 'It doesn't take long to change back. I'm picking you up in 10 minutes.' And the friend hangs up.

So you change again, grumbling away. You go for the movie and realise, 'Hey, I really had a good time.' Not only that, it was good to catch up with your friend. And you are in a much better mood when you get home.

Sounds familiar?

This is exactly what happened to marketing executive Meenal Kohli two weeks ago. Meenal's job is stressful and doesn't give her any time for herself, forget about her friends. So when friends ask her out, her instant reaction is always 'no.'

STRESS BUSTER

But that's not the right thing to do.

Making time to meet your friends helps you ventilate. This provides you immense relief and helps you de-stress, says Dr Ajay Pal Singh, consultant psychiatrist with Max Healthcare.

'Meeting friends regularly helps, especially if you are having problems at home or work. When you discuss things with them, you learn new ways of looking at your problems. This helps relieve stress,' he says.

Jagnoor Singh, operations manager with IT services firm Tech Mahindra agrees. So, unlike Meenal, he doesn't have to be coaxed to meet his friends.



REEL LIFE: Take a movie break at least once a week

MAKING TIME TO MEET YOUR FRIENDS HELPS YOU VENTILATE. THIS PROVIDES RELIEF

Jagnoor and his friends are part of a biking club that meets every Sunday to plan trips, discuss new routes, share photographs and information about new places they've discovered. The Delhi-based gang also takes time off twice a year for serious biking trips. They drive down to South India and back in January and to Ladakh in May.

Jagnoor says though his biking trips involve great planning and considerable expense, it is completely worth it. 'On these trips, you can't answer your phone, nor can you check your email. You are completely cut off. So there is no work. It's all play. It's a perfect way to relax.'

Those not as adventurous can meet within the city but whether you meet for a movie or drinks or a coffee or a concert means you have to make time to do it.

Often, when we are stressed, most of us withdraw from social activities since they are but one more thing to do in an already busy day. But that's when you should go that extra mile to socialise.

MAKE AN EFFORT

'When people are stressed they tend to withdraw. They become uncommunicative and irritable. But this is when you should make all the more effort to meet. Because this is when you need the support of friends the most,' says Dr Singh.

He adds that though SMS, phone or email are convenient ways of keeping in touch, one-on-one interactions are the best. 'Man is a social animal. Technology does not substitute for one-on-one interaction,' he says. When you meet people, you also read body language. That provides you a certain element of comfort too, he says.

Often friends keep planning to meet but never get down to actually doing it. Advertising professional Chayan Joshi has found a simple way to tackle that. 'Whenever I meet a friend I haven't been in touch with on Facebook and when we promise to meet, I fix a date and time at that very moment because I know if I don't, we will never meet.'

Chayan's industry is notorious for its late hours but the 27-year-old makes it a point to leave office on time at least twice a week to catch up with friends. 'I can keep working because there is always work. But I have to make an effort to get out or I'll never meet anyone,' he says.

Amen to that.

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By the way

SOCIALISING WITH friends doesn't always mean you go out for a drink. Depending on your interests, you can join a club like a book or biking club or even take a language or dance class together. All these provide excellent opportunities to meet.

PLANNING WEEKEND or even longer trips with friends you aren't able to meet very often is a great way to catch up.

OFTEN FRIENDS keep planning to meet but never get down to actually doing it. The best way to deal with this is to fix a date and time the moment someone says 'let's meet.' That way everyone adjusts their schedule accordingly.

