



The time-off prescription

MARY LOU QUINLAN TOOK A FIVE-WEEK VACATION FROM HER JOB, AND IT CHANGED HER LIFE. HER ADVICE: YOU SHOULD DO THE SAME



 QUINLAN STOPPED TO SMELL THE ROSES, AND LIFE GOT ALL THE SWEETER.

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ive weeks off from work? You may be rolling your eyes at the mere idea. But in her new book, *Time Off for Good Behavior*, Mary Lou Quinlan, the former CEO of a New York advertising agency, writes about 37 women who, like her, had hit a wall and needed a breather to ask themselves: What next? Whether they found the answer—like Quinlan, who was inspired to start her own marketing firm, called Just Ask A Woman—or are still searching, those who left work emerged relaxed and attuned to what they really want from life. Quinlan, 51, told *More* why we all should take time off—and argues, compellingly, that it's not as impossible as we think.

Why is it so important for women at this stage of their careers to take time off?

“The first day of my leave was my forty-fifth birthday. Like many *More* readers, I know what it feels like to have 25 working years under my belt, and still crave an exhilarating experience in the next 25. Women of my generation have paid their dues big-time and have more than earned a break. We have a track record of being the ones to worry about our children, our spouses, our parents, our friends. Time off gives us the space to reclaim an out-of-control life.”

Why do we find it so hard to take it?

“The women I interviewed didn't blame their corporations or their bosses. They blamed themselves for overworking. They are their own worst enemy. When I speak to women who are plain exhausted about taking time off, I hear 'I can't.' They see it as black and white.”

How much time off do we need?

“It depends on how you are feeling. One