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## Summer vacation plans look different

LINDA WHITE

Summer may be just around the corner but many professionals in Canada plan to keep their nose to the grindstone, new research from global staffing firm Robert Half suggests.

According to its survey of more than 500 office workers, 30% of employees expect to take fewer days off this summer compared to last year because of COVID-19, while 8% plan to take more time off.

Other findings: 27% will save their vacation time for later in the year, hopefully to travel; 10% won't take time off because they have too much work to do; 29% will take days off for self-care and mental health; and 20% would like to take a vacation but are watching their finances because of the pandemic.

While 28% of workers say their employer or manager has encouraged them to take time off since the pandemic began, 67% say there has been no communication about using vacation days. Furthermore, 5% admit they've been discouraged from taking time off from work.

"Companies are operating in overdrive these days, often trying to navigate shifting business demands with leaner teams, which can mean heavier workloads and longer days for their staff," said David King, Canadian senior district president of Robert Half.

But it's more important than ever for workers to take time for themselves, he said. "A simple change of pace with the chance to disconnect can make all the difference in helping professionals avoid burnout and return to work recharged, better focused and more engaged."

Employers should encourage staff to make vacations and their well-being a priority, King said. "Managers should set the example by taking advantage of their own time off and empower employees with more flexible deadlines and additional support while people are away, so that everyone is able to truly relax and unplug on their days off."

## Book offers roadmap for change

LINDA WHITE

She's a self-taught home designer, TV host and producer, best-selling author and in-demand public speaker. But after five successful TV series and her own product line, Debbie Travis could no longer "go through the motions."

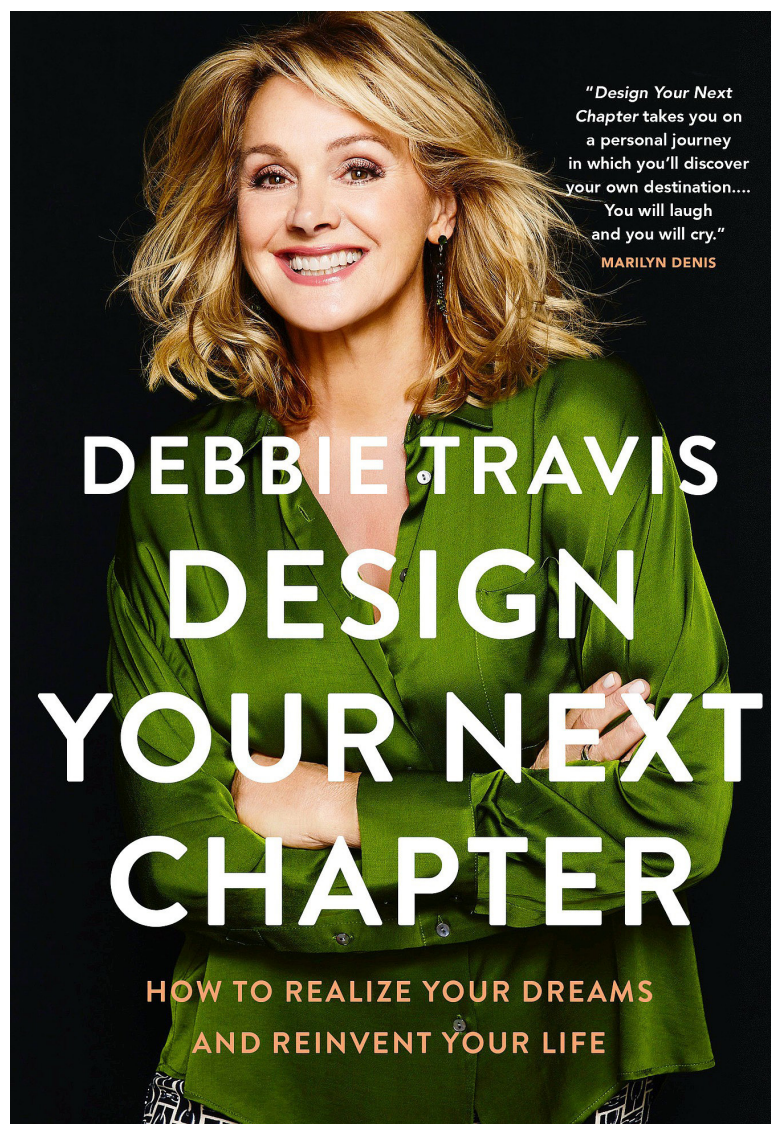
Travis's "secret daydream" of buying a simple holiday home in Tuscany had no deadline until the U.K. native spontaneously announced, during a speaking engagement, plans to host a women's retreat in the picturesque Italian region. The fact that she didn't yet own a place there hardly deterred her: she rented a villa.

After that first retreat, Travis ended up purchasing a rundown estate that she transformed into a 14-bedroom hotel with plans to offer the occasional retreat while continuing her TV career. But the retreats took on a life of their own, attracting people craving something new and becoming her own next chapter.

Especially now, Travis believes many people realize they're craving something new — either by design or out of necessity as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to slam the world's economy. "The silver lining is that we've been gifted time," she said, pointing to a U.K. survey that suggests just a tiny fraction of people want to return to their old lives.

"This is maybe a time when people can get pen and paper out and really think about what they want and what would make them happier. They could then ease into how they would do it," said Travis. She shares lessons learned, along with tips, ideas to jumpstart your dreams, and stories of others who took a U-turn after reaching their own crossroads in *Design Your Next Chapter: How to Realize Your Dreams and Reinvent Your Life* (originally published in 2018 by Random House Canada).

Over the years, Travis created her own 10 commandments and says the first — lose the fear — is the most important. Whether fear of the unknown or fear of trying something



Cover illustration of the 2020 paperback edition of *Design Your Next Chapter*, published by Vintage Canada, a division of Penguin Random House Canada Ltd. **SUPPLIED**

new, it can be disabling. "I like to put fear in perspective. Fear is really when you have no control," she said. Consider, for example, having a seriously ill child or falling so far behind on your rent or mortgage that you risk losing your home.

Instead of labelling the emotion you feel when challenging yourself to commit to a new chapter in your life as fear, describe it with words like "anxious," "worried" or "uncertain" — all feelings that are totally normal when associated with change and completely manageable, Travis said.

She recommends making two lists: the first includes everything that's holding you back from beginning your next chapter and the second is a catalogue of everything you

feel positive and excited about regarding this new phase in your life. "The second list might be very short. 'My mom said I could bake' might be the only thing on it. Then go back to the fear list and go through each item, starting with the most serious."

Start to understand the difference between the things over which you have little or no control and the things that are excuses. Don't have the money to launch your dream? That's a legitimate worry, but Travis encourages you to find professional help and advice from people who've been there and done that to come up with a strategy to reach your monetary goals, which might include securing a loan, finding an investor and dipping into savings.

## Create a vision board

Just like a designer creates a vision board of inspirational pictures and materials when putting a room together, Debbie Travis encourages those thinking about their next chapter to hang a large poster board on a wall and pin anything that speaks to them. Hang it in a place you pass every day, because simply glancing at the images will feed your thoughts. "I had a vision board for years when I dreamed about a villa in Italy and it all came true, though maybe not exactly as pictured," Travis said.

"It doesn't even matter if it doesn't come to fruition. Your vision may change over the years, and you change the pictures."

One woman featured in Travis's book launched a home-based baking business with a simple investment of flour, eggs and sugar. Another gave up plans to earn her MBA and invested the money she and her spouse had saved to buy a house to launch Knix, now a hugely successful direct-to-consumer intimate apparel brand.

"A lot of self-help people talk about passion but a lot of the women who come to our retreats say 'I don't know where my passion is any more,' and they're ashamed of that."

"I wrote in the book about one woman saying: 'I feel like my passion is a dripping tap. Over the years, it just dripped away.'"

"Life does that to you. Your passion may be your children, and then suddenly one day they don't need you anymore," Travis said.

"It's really important to dig deep and learn to play again. Have fun and think: 'What do I want to do?' Sometimes, as you get older, you don't need as much money as you did when you were 35, so maybe it's a good time to start something new," she said.

Some industries likely won't survive the pandemic, while others — including tourism — will change as more people opt to vacation in their home countries, for instance. "This is the time to start getting your antennae up and to really think about your next chapter," said Travis.