



Labor Day means getting back into a routine. Don't count on it.

By Ray Sanchez, CNN 6 days ago

Labor Day celebrates America's labor movement and the blood, sweat and toil of its workers.



© ALLEN J. SCHABEN/LOS ANGELES TIMES/GETTY IMAGES SAN CLEMENTE, CA - SEPTEMBER 02: BEACH-GOERS ENJOY A WARM SUNNY DAY AHEAD OF THE LABOR DAY HOLIDAY WEEKEND NEAR THE SAN CLEMENTE PIER WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 2, 2020. HEALTH OFFICIALS ARE CAUTIONING AGAINST CROWDED HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS IN AN EFFORT TO MAINTAIN THE SLOW OF THE SPREAD OF THE CORONAVIRUS. ON WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 2, 2020 IN SAN CLEMENTE, CA. (ALLEN J. SCHABEN / LOS ANGELES TIMES VIA GETTY IMAGES)

Never mind the last-minute barbecues, bargains and beach days.

Monday marks the unofficial end of summer. It's more New Year's Day than New Year's Day, really. The day after Labor Day is a time to reset. To return to life's ordinary rhythms. To punch the clock and ring the school bell.

But there's no ordinary in 2020. And the summer's third and final holiday weekend, like every other respite of late, seems to have deeper meaning in a year that nearly 200,000 souls have been lost in the pandemic, millions have been left jobless, and a deep political divide, social unrest and long overdue racial reckoning has swept the nation. "In a sense there's a dark shadow around this particular holiday," said David Blustein, a professor of psychology at Boston College and the author of "The Importance of Work in an Age of Uncertainty: The Eroding Work Experience in America."

"We don't know what the future holds regarding the pandemic. There's also enormous amount of stress about the election. We don't know what's happening with schools. There's a tremendous amount of not knowing."

So many face a 'precarious' situation

Labor Day weekend is supposed to be a time of relaxation. For three days, time and responsibility are suspended. There are festive events, weekend get-togethers, backyard cookouts, family reunions, short road trips and coast-to-coast travel. "The seasons, they're kind of the transitions," said Sonja Lyubomirsky, a professor and vice chair of psychology at the University of California, Riverside.

"And the seasons are all feeling a little different... Human beings really need that kind of structure and ritual and sort of those changes that we look forward to every year. We also dread them but part of what gives life meaning is that structure."

But how to find meaning in a [country that lost 20.5 million jobs in April and nearly one million the previous month](#) during the height of the coronavirus pandemic. The US economy added 1.4 million jobs in August but [far more jobs were lost during the pandemic than in the Great Recession](#) or dot-com bust. Millions of [families are still in need of benefits](#) to make ends meet while Congress continues to argue about the next stimulus package.

"This is where the symbolism of Labor Day is very important," Blustein said. "We have millions of people who aren't working. And in some ways that crisis is being kind of relegated to the margins of our worries and our concerns... Of the millions of people out of work, many of them are being evicted. Many of them have no food, housing insecurity, health care insecurity. So on this Labor Day, when we think about work, we also will think about all of our fellow citizens who've lost so much, and the danger that we could also lose our jobs. Everyone's work life these days is precarious in some way."



© JULIA WALL/THE NEWS & OBSERVER/AP UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA STUDENTS AT CHAPEL HILL, N.C., CAMPUS WAIT TO ENTER A FITNESS CLASS LAST MONTH.

Rather than a fresh start, 'an endless loop'

An estimated 30 to 40 million Americans are [living on the edge of eviction](#), according to a [report by The Aspen Institute](#).

By the end of Sunday, there were more than 6.2 million coronavirus cases and at least 188,941 deaths in the US, [according to Johns Hopkins University](#).

"It seems like we're in kind of an endless loop," said Kate Sweeny, a psychology professor at the University of California, Riverside.

"Right now I think we're all just under an enormous amount of what frankly health psychology would consider a chronic stress. That is not great physically or mentally. Chronic stress is associated with all kinds of psychological struggles—[anxiety](#), [depression](#), and pretty much any other unpleasant, emotional experience you might imagine."

Americans are living through what Blustein calls "a period of intersecting losses." "One of them is people losing loved ones, people having family members or themselves having had Covid and having all of the post-Covid health problems," he said. "So in some ways this period has shattered our illusions of health."

And there's the loss and potential loss of work and the capacity to survive, the loss of social connection due to isolation and social distancing, the loss of boundaries from working at home at the same time as the kids are learning remotely.

"I think on this Labor Day weekend people might feel these losses in a much more powerful and emotional way," Blustein said.



© JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES NURSE RUSHES TO PATIENT BEING ADMITTED TO REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER IN SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA, IN MAY.

Home is where the work place is

The ongoing health crisis means that many students will continue to take online classes at home in the fall. And many parents will keep working from home and attempt to maintain work-life balance in close quarters.

"I've joked several times that—and I think it's kind of true—my full time job this year is just like talking everybody off ledges," said Laura Reber, founder and CEO of Chicago Home Tutor, whose firm has been working with parents frantically searching for school alternatives in the fall. "Everybody's like panicking and I'm like, OK, let's just look at this."

Some parents are [forming groups to collectively hire a teacher for home school](#). Others have [created "pods," or rotating virtual learning groups](#) which will meet at a different home each day of the week.

Lyubomirsky said her two youngest children, ages 7 and 9, have started the school year taking classes online. An older son just left for college in Pennsylvania. A daughter took a leave of absence from college because her classes are online.

Lyubomirsky has been working from home, as has her husband, an attorney. "We're kind of not that far from each other and actually we were very excited when my son left because now we can use his room to get farther away," she said, with a laugh. "The two little ones are in Zoom school but in different rooms. One is the living room. It's like every part of the house is being used for work. It's very difficult. There's friction. We're lucky because our house is actually pretty big but most people are experiencing a version of this."

Blustein suggested that people take time to focus on what gives them meaning and purpose in life.

"During this Labor Day weekend we could try to balance our anxiety with maybe going back to the meaning of the holiday -- to honor the workers that we know, the workers in our family, our grandparents, our ancestors," he said. "And look around us and realize that working people are helping us to get through this crisis."

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/labor-day-means-getting-back-into-a-routine-dont-count-on-it/ar-BB18Mmux>