

De-stress your family vacation



Try these tips for a great trip.

FAMILY VACATIONS OFFER WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITIES to share new experiences with loved ones, create lasting memories and escape from daily stress. But have you ever felt like you need a vacation, after a vacation?

We often start a holiday with high hopes and expectations – after all, the point of a family getaway is to enjoy some wonderful “us” time. But after a day or two of being on the move and toting luggage, frustration and tension can mount. Here are a few tips to help de-stress your holiday and keep everyone happy, including Mom and Dad.

Pack early

Racing around the night before a trip – or worse, the morning of a flight – is sure to start your vacation on the wrong foot. Get your suitcases loaded with at least 24 hours to spare. Use the oxygen mask example here: Get yourself squared away before helping your kids, or spouse, pack.

Plan the big stuff in advance

Consider preparing the trip itinerary in advance to avoid being caught without reservations, resources or directions. It is also a good idea to make some reservations ahead of time, for things like activities and big dinners out – nothing is more stressful than dinnertime with nothing to eat but leftover plane pretzels.¹

Do your homework and involve the kids

If you have children, you probably understand that your ideal vacation may not be what your kids have in mind, so try to get them involved in planning. If your kids are old enough to surf the internet, then have them research your destination to find out more about it – they may even discover something interesting they’d like to do that you hadn’t previously thought of. And well before your vacation, squirrel away more activity options than you’ll need. That way, while on your trip, your family can pick and choose activities based on everyone’s mood of the day.

Set expectations

If you prepare your kids for the experience, they’re likely to enjoy it more (and so will you). If your destination requires a long flight, tell them what to expect, but put a positive spin on it. For instance, a 15-hour flight could mean being able to watch three movies on their own personal TVs. How great is that!

¹ www.sheknows.com/parenting/articles/816316/monday-mom-challenge-make-family-vacation-a-vacation-for-you-too

Pack lots to do

Keeping kids (and some adults!) occupied on a long drive or flight can save your sanity – and theirs. Bring toys and books they haven't seen before, colouring supplies, activity books, games, snacks, and yes, tablets and smartphones. (Just don't forget the chargers.)

Bring a first-aid kit

When you're travelling, you may not be able to buy the brands you know, so packing pain and cold medications, antibiotic ointment and Band-Aids is always a good bet.

Prepare yourself to unplug

In our tech-happy world, it's hard to step away from our phones and tablets – but it's a little easier when you know your work is being handled while you're gone. Entrust a colleague to be your backup while you are away and delegate your work duties clearly before you leave for your trip. Make sure colleagues know in advance whom to communicate with in your absence, and schedule a meeting on your return to get caught up.

Find some alone time

This goes for everyone you are travelling with: Find a few minutes alone every day. Take a long bath. Take a solo trip to the convenience store. For parents travelling with young children, consider hiring a (hotel- or friend-approved) babysitter for some adults-only outings.

With a few good strategies and some thoughtful planning, your family vacation can be fun and a lot less stressful, allowing you and your loved ones to focus on what is really important – spending rewarding time together. ■