

Simple Tips for De-Fusing Travel Stress

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When the beauty of summer arrives, it is natural to conjure up the wish for a perfect vacation. You know the one- where all trains and planes arrive on time, your destination is blissful, the weather is superb, and people are always laughing and getting along, while time unfolds with ease.

Yeah, right.

In actuality, taking a vacation can often be a hugely stressful event. And given that the whole point of a vacation is to de-stress your life, it's worth it to give some thought about possible strategies for pre-empting difficult moments. Here are some ideas that might help:

Money

Plan on bringing more money than you think you will need. It is one of those mysteries of travel – it very often costs more than you anticipate. And if financial stress is something you experience in your daily working life, you certainly don't want to experience it while you are on vacation. Create a budget and then add a sum of money for each day that is in excess of those numbers. Add a final dollop of dough for that unexpected something, because you never know what may catch your fancy. Remember, you don't want to be wondering how you are going to pay for the joy you are having. You want to be having the joy.

Sleep

Nothing can scupper a good time or a great day like having had a terrible night's sleep the night before. You can be in the world's most beautiful location but it won't feel beautiful if you're really tired. Good sleep is so essential to feeling balanced that all it takes is one bad night to put an edge on the day or even several days that follow. Given that it is hard to predict if you will be comfortable in whatever bed you will be sleeping in, try creating as much of your own comfort as you can. Bring your own pillow. Wear a sleep mask to ensure you sleep in total darkness. Avoid too much caffeine late in the day and turn off all of your devices at least an hour before your retire. Wear earplugs. If you drink alcohol later in the day or evening, remember to drink a couple full glasses of water before you go to bed. And don't forget to nap. You're on vacation, remember?

Be Honest

Years ago, I took a trip to Morocco with some close friends and we found it a very difficult place to be. We were always hot, often tired, frequently hassled and sometimes even scared. To cope we developed a system where we would imagine having invisible stars on our foreheads to signify how cranky we were. A four star crank was the worst and rather than snap at each other, we would simply say; 'I'm wearing four stars' and we all would know to either move away or move closer to each other to offer support. The system was simple and funny and it saved us from taking our frustrations out on each other.

Consider adopting this idea or creating one of your own. Kids are great at coming up with these kinds of ideas. If you are traveling with children, ask them ahead of time, how they would like to communicate their discomfort in a fun and creative way. Having a system in place before you go will ensure you have a ready splash of comfort when sorely needed.

Take Time to Step Away

If you are traveling with family or friends, don't pressure people to be together constantly. Yes, you came on this vacation as a group, but it doesn't mean that you have to function as a group all of the time. Here's an example;

On a recent trip to New Orleans, a friend of mine noticed that temperatures seemed to be rising and it wasn't just the weather. The various members of her family had different ideas of what constituted a a good time and feelings were flying and people were getting



hurt. The answer they came up with was simple – everyone was given a chance to step away and do their own thing. Dad went to a war museum to satisfy his interest in history, mom and youngest daughter took a cooking class, teenage son spent time hanging out with the street musicians. At the end of the day, everyone reconvened happily with stories to share.

Togetherness only really works when people are happy to be together. So, gather your clan and choose who wants to be where and when. Sometimes creating an easy weave of time together and time apart is just what is needed to keep the joy flowing.

Drop the Pressure to Have Fun

Sometimes the pressure to have a good time while on vacation is enough to hijack the joy in the experience. If you can simply roll with whatever your experiences are offering, without expectations, then disappointments or difficulties can be more easily left behind. Planes get delayed, traffic exists, rain happens and so does extreme heat. But that was yesterday and today, hopefully, everything will be just fine.

Don't Forget to Breathe

If you do encounter some truly exasperating circumstances, don't forget to breathe. It has been scientifically proven that all it takes is ten complete breathes to change your body chemistry. Then, when the body has made this change, it will start to create a cycle of a more relaxed response to external circumstances. Breathing is the best, simplest and more powerful tool we have to enhance our own well being. And we need nothing more than ourselves to take advantage of it. So, take advantage of it. When standing in line, waiting in traffic, coping with unwanted weather, or calming a screeching child – breathe.

In the end, when all else fails, it is best to remember the old adage that reminds us to go with the flow. When moments of hardship arise, just remember they won't last forever. And repeat this to yourself: "We may not be able to control our circumstances, but we can control how we react to them." Keep your inner compass pointed towards joy and let the bumps ride themselves out. Let your vacation truly be a vacation.

