

The Faculty and Employee Assistance Program Newsletter

The Family Vacation

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Let's face it, traveling and vacationing with children is an adventure in itself, regardless of where you go. The preparation, packing and unpacking can be daunting but with good planning, a modicum of luck, a sense of humor and an adventurous spirit, the family vacation can be great fun for everyone. Most adults approach the family vacation as a way to spend time together, relax, have fun, and create new memories. Kids just want to have FUN. Here are some ideas and tips to help your family vacation proceed as smoothly as possible this summer.

Planning Ahead

Be realistic about your family and the individual styles and/or needs of the members. The adults should talk carefully about their expectations for themselves, each other and the children and guide the vacation accordingly.

Involve everyone in the planning and decisions. A family meeting can be called to discuss the options and outline the itinerary, then draw it on a map with the children.

Consider what type vacation suits the members of the family best at this point in time and with the various ages represented: beach, mountains, camping, educational stops, amusement parks, etc? How long should the vacation last, how far to travel each day, how much car time getting to and from? These are important considerations for the whole family.

Be sure to factor in that children get tired quickly, are hungry all the time, need bathrooms anytime and that rigid schedules and time tables are major stress makers when you are trying to blend children's needs with detailed travel plans. Keep it flexible, go with the flow.

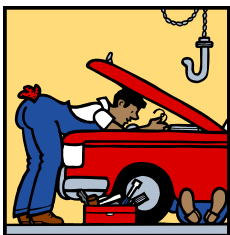
Safety

Clean out the car before you pack it – sounds obvious but it isn't. Go ahead and clean out the winter items, never used items and trash. It will feel fresher and help you remember where things are when repacked for the trip.

Include a first aid kit – band-aides, anti-itch cream, antibiotic cream, extra sunscreen, tweezers, alcohol swabs, Advil/Tylenol/Sudafed backups, etc.

Have your MD and Pediatrician office and on-call numbers handy. Take your health insurance cards with you. Locate the nearest hospital and determine how to call an emergency vehicle in the area you are visiting. Not every area uses 911.

Check the car seat and seat belts, have them available and unencumbered so there are no excuses for not using them.



Change the oil, ensure the car inspection and tax stickers are up to date, check the tire pressure, other car maintenance?

Block the sun from car seats and seatbelt buckles. They can burn children quickly when the car has been closed up.

Tie everything down carefully once packed so no loose objects can fly through the vehicle if an accident occurs.

Keep a recent photo of your child(ren) in your wallet.

Travel Tips



Consider traveling off-peak – early a.m. or after dinner.

Hit the dollar store for inexpensive items to dole out along the way or create an individualized goodie bag. “Every 100 miles” or “every hour” can be the marker that the child(ren) keep track of.

Consider using a DVD player on long trips but do not allow movies to be the only travel technique used. Travel can be wonderful time for reading – aloud to the family or individually, playing car games, telling stories, etc. Books on tape that everyone can enjoy are great too.

Give each child a disposable camera to record his/her own vacation shots.

Encourage your children to journal each day in their own vacation book. The book can also double as drawing tablet.

Bring the stuffed animal, blanket or special toy that helps your child(ren) feel secure and comfortable.

Schedule run-around time to burn off some energy. Visiting different parks can be a fun part of going new places.

Diaper wipes are helpful for many situations – keep some on hand.

Keep a change of clothes in a plastic bag in the car for each child.

Dress your family in shirts of the same bright colors for easier identification in crowds.

Ensure the cell phones are powered up if parents need to split up or teenage kids want more freedom.

However you travel, remember to keep your expectations in line with your kids' developmental levels, be ready to readjust the plans at a moment's notice, give up the idea of a “perfect” family vacation and just focus on the fun. Enjoy!

Other Resources

www.survivedrive.com
www.familytravelnetwork.com
www.peekaboo.net
www.1000tips4trips.com

Lansky, Vicki, [Troublefree Travel With Children: Helpful Hints for Parents On the Go.](#)

