

PARENT TEENS

SUMMER 2021

SUMMER
plans

VACATIONS
THAT DON'T
OVERWHELM

**late-stage
pandemic
burnout**

what to say when you hear...
I HATE YOU!

working with a
Parent Coach



Q I NEED FAMILY VACATION IDEAS THAT WILL DELIGHT, NOT OVERWHELM

By Leslie Josel, Order Out Of Chaos
As originally appeared in ADDitude magazine

GOOD, OLD-FASHIONED ROAD TRIPS ARE A POPULAR FAMILY VACATION IDEA DURING THE PANDEMIC. BUT HOW DO YOU PLAN AN ADVENTURE THAT WILL NEITHER OVERWHELM NOR BORE YOUR CHILD WITH ADHD? SNAPSHOTS FROM A SUCCESSFUL MOTHER-SON VACATION.

Q: “I am going to visit my parents and have decided to take my son with me. It’s going to be a road trip. And we’re going to drive and stop on the way to have some fun along the way. I’ve never been away with just my son and I’m a little nervous. What should I plan? I think we need some quality time together, but I don’t want to overwhelm him. I know you have a son with ADHD. Have you ever been away just the two of you? How did you do it?” – TravelingMom

Hi TravelingMom:

I’m so excited for you! There is nothing like grabbing a precious opportunity to spend one-on-one time with your child – whether it’s a one-hour lunch date or a week-long road trip. I remember taking my son when he was 16 on a similar road trip. Truth be told, I was very nervous because 7 years had passed since our previous mother-son trip. I knew this trip was going to be hugely different. Although I braced myself for a VERY different experience, it was eye-opening!

Here are my lessons from the road.

#1: My son and I have nearly polar opposite travel styles. He’s a go-with-the-flow, we’ll-get-there-when-we-get-there kind of traveler. Me? Do you really need to ask? I had planned this trip for weeks: what we’d see and visit, the best times to go to certain places, where we’d eat, etc. However, I caught on very quickly – the relaxed, easy look on Eli’s face got me thinking, “Maybe I need to dial it back a little and not have everything so planned.” So I loosened up the reins, gave Eli more control of what we did... or not, and allowed more spontaneity to fill our days. And I’m so glad I did because we ended up grabbing last-minute tickets to see a basketball game that was one of the true highlights of the trip. So schedule the unscheduled!

#2: I needed to slow down when I traveled. I like to go all day on vacation so I can make every minute away from home count. My son? Not so much. Even at 16, he needed breaks to recharge and refuel. And I needed to respect that. Finding cafes for a coffee or ice cream break usually did the trick. Lesson learned!

#3: The more independence I gave Eli, the more he rose to the occasion. There were times on the trip when I needed to work and, therefore, we headed back to the hotel midday. After being couped up for a few hours, he asked if he could go exploring on his own. My initial impulse was to say no. But I caught myself and allowed him the freedom to navigate the city on his own. After making my parameters crystal clear and making sure his phone was fully charged, I sent him off to explore. Later that evening, over dinner, he admitted he had to keep track of a lot, but he never worried or felt that things were out of control.



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LESLIE JOSEL

#4: We needed a break from each other from time to time. Who am I kidding? I can be quite the sensory overload; it was more likely that Eli needed a break from me! So if he stuck his headphones over his ears after we got back to our hotel room at night, I didn't take it personally. I needed to respect his space and his need to retreat.

#5: Establishing reasonable rules for both of us really helped. For him: no phone while I was driving. I wanted him to stay engaged and keep me company. For me: no endless popping into charming stores for "the perfect find." Did we keep to the rules? Well, he used his phone from time to time and I hit my fair share of cute antique stores. But the little cheating here and there also helped us respect the rules even more.

#6: (a HUGE one) A constant barrage of new information coming all day long isn't Eli's thing. This is true for most individuals with ADHD. While I am an information junkie and read every display at a museum, he likes to get the feel of the place first and do a deep dive in one or two select spots. But give him a museum or tour where he already had an interest? Well, let's just say we strummed guitars and ukuleles for hours at the Gibson factory in Memphis.

Final Lesson:

We did our deepest talking, hardest laughing, sang the best songs, fought our loudest fights, ate the unhealthiest snacks, and had our most peaceful moments in the car. And just like those old-school field trips or family vacations, it was never about the destination but always the journey. I'll remember that one for the longest time. Enjoy yours

This article was originally published by ADDitude Magazine where Leslie Josel writes a weekly column called "Dear ADHD Family Coach®". She answers the reader's most pressing questions on a whole range of ADHD parenting topics.

