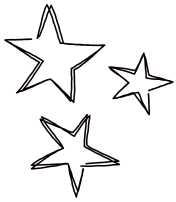




HOW TO SUPPORT AUTISTICS ON VACATION



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Going on vacation can be a fun and enjoyable time for the whole family. Scientific research links taking time off to improved heart health, reduced stress, and higher productivity, and by taking a vacation, you can provide a vital reset to both your mind and your body! While beneficial for our health, planning for and going on vacation can be stressful. For many Autistics, predictability is highly important, and navigating new locations, foods, sights, and sounds can be very overwhelming. With tools and strategies for sensory support, advance planning, and flexibility, vacations can be meaningful and enjoyable experiences. Here are some strategies that may be helpful as you plan your next vacation with your Autistic self or loved one.

PREPARATION

- Involve the Autistic individual in the planning. Letting them help choose activities and destinations can increase engagement and reduce anxiety.
- Create a calendar for yourself or with your loved one, friend or family member.
- Visuals are helpful! Look at websites, videos, and maps of where you will be going.
- If traveling with friends or family, explain that your family may take frequent breaks, snacks, and do fewer activities than they do.
- Identify where bathrooms, snacks, and good places for breaks are before you get there.
- Plan to divide and conquer, splitting ways if some need a break and some don't, **or** normalize that if one needs a break, we all take a break.
- Encourage everyone, of all ages, to pack a small backpack with items important to them, such as snacks of their choosing, sensory items (headphones, sunglasses, fidgets), preferred tech, etc.
- Have backup plans for weather, schedule changes, or sensory triggers.
- Avoid overscheduling yourself! ❤️

TOOLS AND ACCOMMODATIONS

- Stay fueled and hydrated; bring snacks and water everywhere.
- Utilize the sensory items in the individual's backpack to support moments where there are sensory triggers.
- Make each day predictable, discussing what will happen before you do it.
- Offer flexibility when plans need to change based on needs.
- Many amusement parks offer Disability Pass programs that allows guests with disabilities to use designated access entrances to avoid long, conventional standby lines.
- Be Silly! Silly songs, silly comments etc., can break up a tense moment to help until you can get to the next snack or break.

IT'S OK FOR YOUR FAMILY TO DO VACATION DIFFERENTLY!

- Shifting vacation from a mindset of how many things can we do to a mindset of how can we make this feel good for everyone can decrease the pressure we put on the outcome. While both take time and effort, enjoyment may feel better than achieving a checklist.