

## The American Counseling Association's "*Counseling Corner*" Weekly Columns

### Minimizing The Stress Of That Family Summer Vacation

from the American Counseling Association

Summer vacation season is upon us and as you make plans you may see this as your escape from work, or the demands of school, or just a time to be able to relax and temporarily forget the stresses of daily life.

Unfortunately, many summer vacations don't work out quite that way. Most of us have commented after a time away, "Now I need a vacation to recover from my vacation." It may be said jokingly, but usually indicates that the needed rest and relaxation never really happened.

So, how to escape the problem? Start by being realistic about your work obligations. With cell phones and Internet access just about everywhere, some people find they can't leave the office behind. This usually doesn't lead to much relaxation, but can create real family tension.

If you really can't totally escape work duties, don't worry all day about work or be constantly calling for messages. Instead, schedule specific work time as part of your vacation. Maybe it will be two afternoons when you focus on job-related issues while the family goes off to enjoy themselves. Then, when the work responsibilities are met, turn off the office demands and relax yourself.

Another problem that often causes stress for vacations is simply trying to do too much. Every minute doesn't have to be planned. Every attraction or historical site doesn't have to be visited. Experts advise staying in fewer locations but for longer periods of time. That gives you the chance to enjoy what the place has to offer and to relax as well. They also say that while it's fine to plan and schedule, there should be lots of open time, sometimes to discover a new or interesting attractions, or sometimes just to sit back and do nothing.

Vacations are also more relaxing when the whole family is enjoying it, rather than complaining and fighting. Plan ahead to include activities that will meet at least some of the needs for each family member. Kids can understand that there has to be trade-offs. Let them know there will be some activities included especially to keep them happy, but that there will also be other activities because Mom and Dad deserve to be happy, too.

Keep your vacation plan simple, flexible and under-scheduled and you increase the odds that you all will come back refreshed and relaxed.

*Counseling Corner* is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to [ACAcorner@counseling.org](mailto:ACAcorner@counseling.org) or visit the ACA website at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org)

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