

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

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Tips For Making Holiday Travel Less Stressful

from the American Counseling Association

We're hitting some of the heaviest travel seasons of the year - families getting together for Thanksgiving or making that trek back home for Christmas. And while once upon a time it may have been a pleasant "over the river and through the woods to grandmother's house we go," today it's more likely to be bad traffic jams, long airport security lines and flight delays over which you will have no control.

While there's no way to eliminate these transportation headaches, there are things you can do to control and minimize the stress they can bring.

First is simply accepting what you can and cannot control. No matter how angry or stressed you get that traffic jam isn't going to disappear, the TSA line won't suddenly shrink, and that big storm delaying your flight won't magically vanish.

Instead, look for things you can control in order to lower your stress level. If it's a traffic jam, start playing a word game or singing silly songs with the family. If driving alone, turn on the radio, count to 10, and realize that soon you'll be rolling again. The idea in any such stressful situation is to refocus your anger and frustration. Instead of being mad in that TSA line, silently scan those around you and try to guess where they're going, what their job is, or why they dressed like that to go in public.

Airport delays are common, but sometimes planning can help minimize problems. Try booking an early flight, when airports are often less crowded. This also leaves some extra time to handle a delayed, cancelled or over-booked flight.

And if your flight does get cancelled, experts advise using your cell phone to call the airline, or use the airline's app, rather than getting angry as you wait in that long line to the harassed ticket agent.

If you'll be traveling with kids, whether by plane or car, a little pre-planning can help avoid hungry, complaining, unhappy children adding to the stress. Bring along snacks, reading materials, maybe a game or two to keep them fed and occupied.

And learn the rules. In today's world of extra security check what can go in carry-on luggage and what can't. Know that wrapped presents may have to be opened at security.

Holiday travel doesn't have to be high stress, even if that holiday dinner with Uncle Ed probably will be anyway.

"Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcornet@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org

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