

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

### **Making A Summer Road Trip More Enjoyable**

from the American Counseling Association

It's summer vacation time, which for lots of us means piling in the family car and heading off, hopefully, for fun and adventure. Unfortunately, all too often that summer road trip can become a source of family stress and frustration. It doesn't have to be that way.

Yes, being locked in the back seat of a car for hours on end can be boring, but here are a few ideas to minimize the boredom.

A good starting point is to make sure that everyone is going to be well fed and hydrated during your road trip. A cooler full of drinks and a bag full of healthy snacks can help achieve that goal. And yes, make sure the snacks are healthy. Load the kids up on high-sugar drinks, candy and snacks and you're looking forward to a surge of sugar-fueled energy followed by a big post-sugar crash. Neither of these work well in the confines of a car.

It's also a good idea to plan for stops along the way, especially if you have younger children in the car. Those stops, whether to see an attraction or have a bite to eat (maybe a picnic in a roadside park?), can break up the trip for the kids and the adults as well.

Think about making the journey, not just the destination, a positive and enjoyable part of your trip. Before leaving, check out some tour books for places you might visit along the way. They don't always have to be large tourist attractions. Often the simpler things (an old historic farm, a small museum, somebody's giant ball of string) can be interesting experiences for a brief visit, will usually be crowd-free and give everyone a chance to stretch.

Today's technology can also help keep the car's occupants entertained. MP3 players, portable CD players, handheld games, portable DVD players... the list is long and with earbuds for everyone (including Mom or Dad in the front passenger seat) each can enjoy their own personal entertainment without disturbing anyone else.

Equipped with maps, tour books, snacks, electronics, art projects for young kids, books for older children and anything else that will fight boredom, you'll find that even a long road trip doesn't have to be stressful and frustrating. A little planning and preparation can make the journey as much fun as the final destination.

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

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