

Beating Travel Stress: The Art of Surviving on the Road

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Whether for holidays or business trips, traveling can grate on the nerves of even the most patient soul. From security checks to winding lines to time zone changes, today's traveler faces countless aggravations and inconveniences.

Don't let travel stress dampen your spirits and ruin your voyages! If insomnia, travel burnout, or jet lag plague you as you zip from city to city, all is not lost. By employing several nutritional, physical, and mental strategies, you can relax your body and relax your mind. You'll soon see that touring can indeed be an enjoyable experience, even if unexpected snarls creep into your travel plans.

Sleeping on the Road

Overstuffed pillows. Cardboard-stiff sheets. Saggy mattresses. The discomfort of hotel hopping can challenge the most otherwise indiscriminate sleepers. If you find yourself struggling to catch a few elusive Z's, a few simple techniques will quickly and effectively help you fall asleep.

For the Mind

Never underestimate the power of the body to heal the mind. One technique for helping you sleep on the road is a progressive relaxation exercise that will stop the chatter of your mind. Start by closing your eyes and breathing deeply and regularly. Tense and relax your muscles, starting at your feet for a few seconds. Continue this tense/relax pattern through each part of your body, working up to your head. If necessary, repeat the process a second time. This simple process will force all tension from your body, allowing your mind to shut off while you settle into a comfortable slumber.

Another effective strategy is listening to relaxation tapes. Rhythmic music, often in combination with nature sounds, synchronizes with your breath, allowing you to release stress and fall to sleep. Musician Steven Halpern, Ph.D., for example, has developed a series of compositions called, appropriately, *Effortless Relaxation and Sleep Soundly*. Pop them in the CD player, and let the soothing begin.

For the Body

You can further decrease the probability of tossing and turning in your stiff hotel bed with some help from Mother Nature. Several herbs and other natural over-the-counter remedies may help alleviate your situation.

Valerian root is probably one of the best herbs for letting the body go night-night. Another is Melatonin, a hormone secreted by the brain's pineal gland, which controls the body's reaction to the light-dark cycle. Many health food stores sell Melatonin as a natural remedy for jet lag.

You may consider taking a sleeping pill for the first night of your trip, but be careful of taking sleeping pills regularly, as you can become dependent on them. If all else fails—and you're not lactose intolerant—a nice glass of warm milk may also do the trick, as it contains L-Tryptophan, which has a great calming effect on the body.

Accentuate the Positive

Lost luggage and reservations can drive a travel-weary person to the edge. With waning energy, your frazzled nerves can easily get the better of you. When you find yourself tempted to curse out a rude taxi driver or read the riot act to a clueless desk clerk, it's time for you to take a step back. Pause for a moment and consider the following mind and body solutions for diffusing tension while you're on the road.

For the Mind

Contrary to what you may believe, negative words will not help clerks or cabbies better perform their jobs. The truth is that belligerence will not greatly improve your situation, either; rather, it will stress you. And guess what? Positive thoughts actually keep your energy at a much higher level than negative ones.

To prevent negativity from draining your reserves, consider utilizing an “energy bubble” in stressful situations. The moment you feel yourself getting riled up, stop and take a deep breath. Imagine an invisible bubble surrounding you; consider this shield to be an extra layer of protection between you and the outside world.

This has the effect of removing yourself emotionally from a charged situation, providing clarity and calm. You'll be amazed to find that negative thoughts or situations will have a difficult time breaching your bubble and reaching you.

For the Body

Holistic healing techniques reveal many of our body's secret remedies. A little-known fact is that we have hidden “energy buttons” that help boost vitality and, in turn, aid us in dealing with inevitable travel hassles. They may sound silly, but they work!

Place your tongue at the roof of your mouth, about one-fourth inch behind your front teeth. To locate another energy button, place your index finger and thumb together, forming a circle. Take a few breaths, and shortly, your body will begin to channel newfound energy. Before you know it, you'll be refreshed and unfettered by the inconveniences that come your way.

Beating Jet Lag

During long-distance travels, time zone shifts can wreak havoc on your body. Differences in light throw your circadian rhythms for a loop, often leaving you yearning for bed in the afternoon and wide-awake in the wee hours. Fear not, bold voyagers! Help is readily available.

For the Mind

Meditation is an effective weapon in combating jet lag. It has the power to reset your body's internal clock, no matter how many time zones you travel through.

Start by making a commitment to meditate fifteen to twenty minutes twice a day for two to three weeks. When you are flying to a different time zone, add one or two extra meditations to your day. In addition to minimizing the intensity of jet lag, physiological and psychological benefits include lowered heart and breath rates, increased immune system response, and reduction in reaction times. An added bonus: Your quality of sleep will increase so your nightly sleep requirements may even decrease.

For the Body

The New Zealand government realized that they needed to help their commercial pilots' difficulties with jet lag, because once you fly out of New Zealand, you go through many time zones. After much research they discovered a homeopathic formula called No Jet Lag. Take it every couple of hours while you're flying and jet lag disappears.

Enjoy Your Trip!

If you have no choice about the time and duration of your trip, you may as well enjoy it. Take care of your mind and body to minimize stress and maximize fun—or at least tolerance. Travel experiences can be opportunities of a lifetime. Don't let stress prevent you from appreciating your destination and forging lasting memories. Bon voyage!

About the Author: Author of the books *Managing Your Stress: How To Relax and Enjoy*, *Switched-On Living and Brain Gym for Business*, Jerry V. Teplitz, JD, Ph.D., is currently the president of his own speaking and consulting firm. He's been a road warrior for 30 years and created the six CD audio album, *Travel Stress: The Art of Surviving on the Road*. With a masters and a doctorate degree in holistic health sciences from Columbia Pacific University, Teplitz is a former attorney who practices what he preaches to prevent travel burn-out. Contact him at 1 800 77-RELAX (1 800 777-3529), email him at info@Teplitz.com or go to www.Teplitz.com.