

#129 - How to Holiday Road Trip

Hi there! You're listening to The Lazy Genius Podcast! I'm Kendra Adachi, and I'm here to help you be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. Today is episode 129 - how to holiday road trip. It's about that time. Grandparents in faraway states are waiting, but getting in the car with all the stuff and possibly all the children can feel daunting. Hopefully this episode will help that.

A couple of things before we get going, This episode only covers being in the car, not packing or being on vacation or leaving or coming home. It's just for being in the car, the road trip part. I will say though that one of my favorite trip tips is leaving a clean house. Coming home to a house in even moderate chaos is a tough ask. That's my favorite tip; come home to a clean house. But in this episode, it's all about the road trip, and we'll talk about the three E's: expectations, entertainment, and emergencies.

I also asked for your favorite road trip tips on instagram, and we have collected those and put them in a blog post which is basically the best ever. I'll share some of my favorites in this episode, but there will be a link in the show notes to that post, or you can go to thelazygeniuscollective.com/blog to find that post.

Okay, let's start with road trip expectations. Being in the car is a different thing than being in your house. That's obvious, but sometimes kids forget that. Frankly, I can too. I think some great ways to deal with road trip expectations are the following. 1. Say them out loud. Ask everyone who'll be in the car what one thing they're looking forward to the most about the trip, and then make those things happen. Now, if one kid says they're excited to stop at Disneyland on the way and that's definitely not in your road trip plans, maybe instead you can find a Mickey Mouse or favorite Disney toy at the dollar store or a coloring book or something to acknowledge that expectation and love on that kid without just saying "no, weirdo, we're not stopping in Disneyland." So say your expectations out loud. 2. Give yourself as much time as you can. If you're traveling with kids, stop often. Don't have the expectation of making the best time. Leave your expectations of efficiency at home. If they happen, great, but don't expect a seamless trip. Now a quick note about frequent stops. If you have tiny babies or toddlers, it might be that frequent stops are actually a terrible idea. Getting them back in the car seat after a 15 minute stretch break at a rest stop causes more trouble than just powering through. Do what works for you. If frequent stops don't, then don't do them. 3. This one is from @kimandcardell on Instagram: "everyone gets to have one fit consequence-free." I think that's absolutely brilliant. We forget that kids, especially kids who aren't used to traveling, don't know how to regulate being bored or uncomfortable or stuck in a car with their siblings who are being loud or whatever. Rather than reacting to every single sign of disrespect or tantrum with consequences and instruction, operate with understanding and give everyone a free pass, even you and any other adults. I know I need a consequence-free pass, too. I love the grace in that idea. Four is

from another Instagram comment. @kristinheery says “Don’t give up. My kids all had to be trained and now they do a ten hour trip to grandma’s like a boss.” I’ve heard Tsh Oxenreider who is my travel guru say that the more your kids travel, the better travelers they’ll be come. Which means if they’re not used to traveling, show them some grace. It’s tough to be in the car for hours when you’re not used to it. If your road trip is the absolute worst or maybe your first one was last Thanksgiving and you’re wondering if you should even go again because it was so bad, don’t give up. The more you practice, the better everyone will get. And finally 5. This is the most brilliant tip from @pharmgal22. She says to use a piece of yarn with a moving clothespin as a visual for “are we there yet?” Genius. One of the expectations of any road trip is that you’ll actually get where you’re going, but the incessant are we there yet is a stereotype for a reason. This is such a fun visual. Move the clothespin at every stop or every hour or whatever makes the most sense, but having a visual is so so smart. So for our first E of expectation, we have five points: 1. Say your expectations out loud. 2. Give yourself as much time as you can. 3. Everyone gets a free pass for losing it. 4. Don’t give up. Every road trip builds on the next one. And 5. Have an “are we there yet” visual.

Next up, our second E.- entertainment. There were lots of tips about this, but I want to start with one overarching principle of road trips, mostly with kids but really with anyone. It’s not going to be amazingly entertaining all the time. The first time we traveled somewhere when the boys were little, I gave them all their toys at once and snacks almost immediately and started playing an I spy game, and it wasn’t an hour into the trip before they had used up everything and were bored of every game and it was bad. Spread out the entertainment and remember that one thing at a time might not be stimulating and amazing, but it’s also the smartest way to go about it. Somebody on Instagram said - it was @hjelmores I think - said “if you have little kids and everything is peaceful and quiet and going well, don’t point out something outside - chaos.” And I totally get that. Sometimes it’s worth letting one entertaining thing slide by for the sake of the whole group needing quiet in that moment. Not always but it’s worth considering for sure. Just remember that a road trip doesn’t have to be super entertaining the entire time.

Now let’s run down some tips. The first one is about snacks. Snacks were the main attraction in the comments, and for good reason. Snacks in the car for a road trip are vital for many reasons. They’re fun and entertaining, they pass the time, they nourish and all the things, and there’s something about eating on a drive that feels a little extra special. Eating in the car on the way to work feels different than eating in the car on the way to Minnesota. So some snack ideas: a lot of tips were about packing a variety, packing more than you think you need, and snacking rather than stopping for big meals, at least for kids. @k8rhea suggested packing snacks in a craft storage box that you use for beads so that it’s fun and there’s a ton of variety because of all the containers but it’s also contained. There were a lot of comments about putting snacks individual bags and then putting those in a bigger bag and let kids choose a tiny snack bag every hour from the big bag. Or kids have their own big snack bag and choose anything whenever. For our family, we love a gas station snack run. I know it’s more expensive, but about halfway through any trip, we stop at a gas station, and everybody gets to pick any one thing they want. The absurdity of that just blows my kids’ minds. Anything? Even though it’s 10 in the morning I can

get an ice cream bar or a bag of chips? Yes. Yes, you can. It's one of our favorite ways to have snacks be the entertainment. The kids talk about what they'll choose on the way home and compare and list out what they almost chose but didn't. It's a whole thing, and I love it.

Before we leave snacks, I wanted to mention these two tips from @amommysplace, both of which feel really smart. One, she suggests that when you stop for lunch or whatever at a fast food place, let the kids play while the adults eat and then take the kids' food in the car. That way they get out energy, the adults get to eat and rest without having to open ketchup packets for children, and then the kids pass some time on the drive by eating their own meal. Really smart. Another idea from her was if you see an IKEA to stop. Adults get free coffee, and the kids can play for free in that kid's play place. And my addition to that tip is to get a container of cinnamon rolls for the road or for breakfast the next morning.

Okay, let's move on from food as entertainment to a few other tips. There are the obvious forms of entertaining - books, audiobooks, podcasts, movies, art, license plate games, and all the things. I think a great way to approach this like a Lazy Genius is to consider not just the kinds of entertainment you can pack for your kids and yourself but the relational energies of those types of entertainment. Think about things that everyone can do alone, as a group, as a group of kids and a group of adults, screen-related things, out the window related things. Consider that the energy of your road trip is going to vary. Everyone will be talking and then suddenly everyone will be silent. It's kind of funny how that happens, so if you have a kid who doesn't like to go silent, make sure that kid is equipped with a couple of quiet solo things when the family introverts need to tap out. Consider relational energies and choose some entertainment ideas accordingly.

Some specifics. @rachghol suggested glow in the dark bracelets and glow sticks for kids when you're driving at night. I love the fun of that one. @victoriaharder keeps all of the happy meal toys and birthday party goodie bag goodies exclusively for road trips. That saves the trip to the dollar store for little wrapped up treats that a lot of people suggest, and I think that's brilliant. I'm not sure how to get my kids on board with taking their toys right away, but if the expectation is there for "this goes in the trip to grandma's box and you'll get to play with it then" it'll likely work just fine. @emilyasfarmer suggests printing out the trip route for your kids to follow. We got a map at a rest stop (those are all free by the way, so stock up on brochures and stuff when you hit a rest stop, especially ones at the state line), and our oldest son was obsessed with following the map. Such a great idea for certain kids. And @adrienneschenck suggested a lap desk for kids to write and draw and hold snacks and stuff which is a great idea. Again, a huge list will be on the website, so be sure and check that out. The link will be in the show notes.

And our final E: emergencies. I'm not talking about medical emergencies but minor traveling emergencies. Diaper blowouts, a car that feels like a dumpster, spills, that kind of thing. I think my short list of essentials for minor emergencies are old towels which can serve as picnic blankets, wiping off wet slides at a rest stop playground, diaper blowouts, spills, all the things. Other essentials, baby wipes, tissues, quarters for tolls and vending machines, hand sanitizer,

and obviously snacks. I also think that bringing along a gallon or two of water is really smart for when water bottles or lunch drinks are empty but everybody is so thirsty. Or have water bottles themselves in ready supply.

@staceyrenee1228 suggested packing a separate hotel bag for overnight stops so you don't have to unpack everything which is so smart. Similarly, an emergency is when you can't find something you need, so when you pack the car, try and put the completely unnecessary stuff on the bottom and in the back of your car so you don't have to move every suitcase to get to that one duffel bag that has extra books in it. Another emergency tip, make a list before you leave of the things that would destroy your family if you left them behind at Grandma's seven states away - things like beloved stuffed animals, prescription sunglasses, wallets and keys, your phone and charger, that kind of thing. Make a list and rather than doing the general "did we get everything" question, make sure you got at least those things. If you got those things, you'll be fine if you left behind a random T-shirt or towel or something.

A couple more tips. This one from @leannoland is so smart. Throw away trash at every stop. Even if it's just a candy wrapper, throw away trash at every stop so your vehicle doesn't become a dumpster four hours in and make you crazy which is its own kind of emergency. And finally there were several tips to bring a potty with you for tiny butts. If your kid is up for it, pee in a jar, pee in a potty, and stop to dump the pee out into the grass on the side of the highway. I'm guessing those people gave that tip for a reason and at one point had to use some of those emergency towels I mentioned.

I will say that the most important E here is expectations. Road trips aren't magical or easy or amazing. There can be amazing parts, but if you have little kids, it's a situation. But keep your expectation realistic, have fun, don't get too worked up about timing or healthy snacks or too much screen time. Remember that a road trip is a different beast. It's meant to look different than home because it is. Make it special however you want, and remember that the more you do it, the better everyone will become at making it work.

Okay, that's it for today. Check that link in the show notes for the post with all the tips, and if you don't want to miss when new blog posts come out or new episodes are ready for your ears, please join the VIP list where you'll get a monthly email from me with all the things. It's like a Lazy Genius wrap-up called the latest lazy letter, and I take great pride in making that letter something you look forward to. If you're interested in joining, head to thelazygeniuscollective.com/join.

Also at the time I'm recording this, I might have a kid having a minor surgical procedure done this week, so we're holding loosely to the Instagram live this week. Follow me @thelazygenius, and if I'm able to be there live this week, I'll post about it there.

Thanks for listening! UNTil next time, be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. I'm Kendra, and I'll see you next week.

