

Two Easy Tips to Stay Present on Summer Vacation

We've all been there. The moment when our anticipation for the long-awaited vacation quickly turns to unwanted anxiety and stress. Will it be a good vacation? Will the family enjoy it? Will the photos look good? How much will it cost? How will I make sure I can break away from work? So much uncertainty can start to emerge. This can be especially true for military families taking their precious leave or perhaps connecting a vacation to their Permanent Change of Station, moving to their next installation and home.

It's natural to have frequently changing thoughts, so here are two ways to intentionally shift your mentality to make the most of your summer vacation.

1. Identify the opportunity each moment presents ahead of time.

When on vacation, it is human nature to pay attention to annoyances, even the mundane ones. We worry about work, get annoyed at the heat, high prices, crowds, or loud commotion around. Frustrations can run higher when you add in the challenges of a kid, significant other, or friend who found all the right buttons to press. When we focus on these annoyances, our focus becomes trapped on them. We feel drained and need a vacation from our vacation!

Try looking through a lens of opportunity, shifting your focus to notice and savor the little pleasures that a vacation offers. Enjoy the laughter of children playing, the warmth of the sun on your skin, and the vibrant colors of blooming flowers. In amusement parks, choose to notice the joy of those around you, the incredible engineering and designs around each ride, and growing excitement as you wait for your turn for

fun. In every instance, there is an opportunity to connect with others, perhaps learn something new about someone, or see them in a different light. The learning can even be about yourself: "I can't believe I actually went skydiving!" Anticipating and being on the lookout for these opportunities sets the stage for us to be fully immersed in the joy the present has to offer. Ask not what you need to do for your vacation but what your vacation can do for you!

2. Slow down to become present in the moment.

When you find yourself caught up in the chaos that is often part of a vacation, take a moment to pause and breathe. Focus on your senses and the beauty around you. This practice can bring a sense of calm and clarity, allowing you to experience and enjoy the moment fully.

Slowing down helps us remember that this moment is something we've been waiting for. This moment may not be the exact image we had in our mind as plans can go awry, but it often isn't the specific event that makes something special; it's the presence that squeezes out every bit of meaning that sticks with us.

May you welcome the opportunities a summer vacation brings by being open to new experiences and adventures. Whether trying a new outdoor activity, exploring a new place, or simply relaxing and unwinding, allow yourself to engage fully and appreciate these moments.

During a ride, remain seated and always keep your arms and legs inside. During a vacation, stay present and keep your mind focused on opportunities at all times. Wishing you a safe and enjoyable vacation!