



Exercise mindful consideration on vacation

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Last weekend we celebrated Father's Day and heralded in the summer of 2009 with a lot of rain, producing healthy, young vegetable plants as well as the odd washed-out driveway (mine included). Most also reflected on the joyous thoughts of summer travel, vacations and guests.



Whether you are planning on being a guest of friends or family, staying at a resort, celebrating an annual family reunion or other long-awaited get-together, the operative word is 'planning.' This time-consuming exercise is an important ingredient to any successful vacation. Here are a few tips that may enhance your hard-earned time off.

It's always exciting for me to go on trips because I often see friends I miss and visit new places where I can expand my knowledge as well as enjoy some 'me time' to truly relax and recharge my batteries.

I often experience a degree of nervousness derived from anticipation, excitement, anxiety or a combination of all three. It is akin to the feelings we have before an athletic competition, an important business meeting or a large family gathering. These feelings can turn into negative stress if I have not set certain plans in place. If

I am well-organized, however, they can be exhilarating, stimulating and wonderful.

For most outings, making to-do lists is helpful, especially if children and pets are included on the trip. Otherwise, it is far too easy to forget essential items. The first list to create is what clothes to pack. Seasoned travellers can remember most of the obvious things. I count myself among this seasoned group, yet I still forget enough to cause me to give my head a shake. If anyone can relate to this, then I highly recommend that the list be written and not just 'remembered.'

Unlike the heartfelt, handwritten thank you notes I have mentioned on more than one occasion, these lists may be made on the computer and saved for future use. When making clothing lists, I find it best to work from bottom to top, that is, feet to head; i.e. from shoes and socks on up to scarves and hats.

Other lists might include reading and writing materials, favourite foods and snacks, essential medical documentation, credit card information, contact telephone numbers and, yes, blank thank you note cards.

Consider taking that book you've always wanted to read. Travelling also offers a great opportunity to write in a journal. If you haven't done this before, you may find it difficult to get started. Once you begin, however, you may say to yourself, 'I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.'

In planning your trip or inviting friends and family for visits be mindful of careful scheduling. Allow time before and after the visit for preparation and for clean up. This will help ensure the valuable time you do spend with friends is as rewarding as possible.

Overloading your host's washing machine and dryer is not cool. If you generate a lot of laundry, plan to use a public laundromat. Do not be an imposition or an interruption to your host's routine. Just because she's your mother, once you've moved out, you've moved out. Appreciate her generosity but do not abuse it. That would be disrespectful, selfish and rude.

When travelling with your pet, be absolutely sure to clear this ahead of time with your hosts, as well as any inns or hotels where you may be staying. Be sure to bring pet food with you. Introducing new food can cause digestive problems. Also be sure to have clean towels, fresh water and grooming aids. Your pet's routine at home should be maintained as closely as possible while on the road, especially when it comes to his exercise. Above all, be ever mindful of the fact that the interiors of cars and trucks heat to unbearably high temperatures quickly, even in the shade. Cracking a window is not the answer. Don't kid yourself. The memory of losing a pet to this sort of unintentional neglect is an experience you will never outlive.

Finally, a thank you note to your hosts will express genuine appreciation for the hospitality they had extended. It may not guarantee a return invitation; still, it is a way to show the respect we have for those who have given so generously of themselves for our benefit and enjoyment.

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