

# Why I Love Flying With My Children

Vacation season is upon us. That means parents all over America are losing sleep worrying about the question: How do I survive air travel with my kids? New parents in particular tremble at the prospect of their first flight with baby.

Here's my advice to them: Relax! Flying with kids is actually not that big of a deal.

I'm a regular flyer with my 2 children, currently aged 4 and 2. We've taken at least 25 flights together (there have been so many I've lost count). Sometimes my husband could join us, but not always. We've traveled to Europe, Africa, South America and back to North America. Some flights were as short as 50 minutes, others were as long as 12 hours.

If given the choice, I would always rather fly with my children than by myself.

Here's the secret to having a successful flight with children: it all comes down to the parents' mentality. We've decided as a culture that air travel with our offspring is one of the worst parts of parenting. We have assigned it labels like "nightmare" and "torture."

Parents need to free themselves of those attitudes.

I am not judging any parent who is worried. I've been there. After our first child was born, my husband and I were terrified at the prospect of a long-haul flight to visit relatives for Christmas. So when my husband was invited to a conference located a mere 1-hour flight away, we decided the baby and I would come along as a "practice run" for the big flight.

Afterward, we were amazed at how painless it was. Yes, the TSA is a bit more of a hassle when you have a stroller and such.

But it's not significantly worse than normal TSA. The journey was brightened by lovely conversations with fellow passengers who complimented us on our baby and told us stories about their own kids or grandkids.

The true "nightmare" and "torture" is modern air travel itself – not flying with kids. Passengers pay higher prices for ever-decreasing quality. We stand in line for hours waiting to be barked at and groped by TSA agents. Yet somehow our culture has decided that it's the children who are the problem.

I prefer flying with my son and daughter over going solo because they distract me from all that misery. The TSA is one of the most visible expressions of oppressive government. I find it comforting to hold my children's hands and remind myself that the family is the cornerstone of civilization. Governments rise and fall but family endures.

I undertake each journey with the mindset that I will devote myself 100% to my children every minute of the flight. Focusing on supporting my kids helps me forget how uncomfortable I am. It's a far better distraction than lame movies or terrible airline food.

Moreover, it helps ensure your kids behave better on the flight. Kids whose parents are fully engaged with them tend to be calm and content.

We live in an age full of distraction. Many parents acknowledge they could do a better job of getting off their phones and giving their children some undivided attention. Well, for better or for worse, air travel equals distraction-free, quality time with your kids. Parents might as well make the best of it.

Here are a few tips I've learned during my extensive air travel with my children:

1. Maximize movement before the flight.

Let the kids run around and burn as much energy as possible

before they're strapped into their seats. That probably means skipping the option to pre-board.

## 2. Pack lots of snacks.

I feel like the airlines' food offerings shrink with each successive flight I take. To keep kids happy, it is critical to feed them well. Thus, parents should pack a large stash. Don't count on kids eating anything the flight attendants bring by.

## 3. Minimize baggage.

It's tempting to bring a lot of toys, but I always prioritize my mobility. I need to have my arms free to control my kids. I also need to be able to quickly jump into action if one of them runs off.

## 4. Gift wrap anything new.

I usually buy each of my kids a small, inexpensive toy for the flight. To enhance the experience, I'll gift wrap the item and tell them they can only open it once we've boarded. The anticipation of getting a "present" helps keep my children quiet in the security line.

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[Image Credit: Pixabay]