

Managing Your Emotions for Maximum Vacation Fun

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Here we go again! Summer is here and we need a vacation!

Or do we? Do we really need it, or do we just want it? And who says so, anyway? These questions are worth an inquiry, wouldn't you say? So let's see what 3 marriages, 3 children, 4 engagements, 46 years, and over 200,000 miles can teach us about this subject!

Do Not Pass Go...

By all means, find yourself before stepping one foot outside the door. What do I mean? I mean you can save yourself, save your friends, and save your family, too from getting hopelessly lost before you even leave home IF you first take time to sort out what you're wanting on your trip.

Do you want a vacation because it's something you never had and it's missing in your life? Or do you want it because you're entitled to have one, like life owes me a trip? Or do you want it because it's something society dictates you should have? Do you need it to rejuvenate and come back to life again?

And why does this matter? Well, what if everybody on the trip wants a different experience? Are you beginning to feel the tension? Are you all set to fall into the trap of returning from vacation more tired and frustrated than when you left?

How many of you have had an experience like this: you were tired and beat up before going on vacation from spending days and days of managing every aspect of your trip, including but not limited to...husband or wife...kids or relatives...airline arrangements...hotel accommodations...cash saving...managing your household before and after... yours and everybody's schedules...all so you can have a little time to relax! How's it going for you so far?

Now you get there and the fun starts! Now you have to manage everyone's happiness... make sure everyone has something to do that they want to do (...and how many folks are we talking about?)...make sure they all have what they like to eat and drink...and so here we have it - the bottom line: you're holding yourself accountable for everyone else's happiness! Beginning to sound familiar?

Ok – you may be saying – but what about those times it's totally different? Some of us just are just waiting for someone else to take care of everything and we'll just show up and have a good time? We're not considering anybody else – just taking care of the Number One! Mr. or Miss “COU” (Center of the Universe)!

Obviously that isn't working for the person with you, and they're suffering and building so much resentment that if they could leave you on the spot and go back home alone, nothing would make them happier! And some folks are doing just that! But that doesn't work either.

The Flip Side of The Trip

Ok sure, we can stop digging for a moment and acknowledge that not everyone has these issues! Some people are working and coordinating so greatly together that everyone is having relaxing times. But I believe the people who have this great fun are practicing some principles and following some values that give them access to that fun ...and that is where the 3 marriages, 3 children, 4 engagements, 46 years, and over 200,000 miles comes in! They hold some secrets to success I'm going to distinguish for you now.

But first we have to stop and ask: why do we want others to be happy?

Why do we hold ourselves accountable or responsible for others' happiness and good times? What drives us to the edge of frustration and even anxiety if others are not happy...regardless of whether they're unhappy with us or with themselves?

Some of it for sure is our control issues. We have to be in control! We have to make sure everything is going right; we have to know everyone is well! We drive ourselves nuts pretending

we are in control. Now, don't get me wrong! As responsible parents or caring life partners we should care about whether other members of our families or significant others are having a good time. But why must we be the ones to make that happen? Why do we have to do it for them?

Because we are “control freaks”! Yes you! And you know it! Or because we simply lack confidence in them! We hold ourselves above them like, “I know what is good for you and you don't!” Really? You know what I want and what I should do? You know what I should say and what I should eat because you know me so well, and you're so sure of what you know?

I don't know what they call that in English but in my native language we call this an opinion! And Americans and Iranians do the same thing with disagreeable opinions. Here it's called “the round file”!

And then there's fear! Some of us are so scared of others' crankiness that we go way out of our way to make folk happy to avoid dealing their ugly, childish ways.

So by now you've found yourself in one or all of these scenarios at one time or another in the past...or even right now as you're planning your next vacation.

So here comes the distinction that gets you off those head trips and into managing your emotions for the most vacation fun...

I've being married three times – yes, and ready to try it again! I am so blessed in that regard because I've learned so much about being with someone else's needs and wants and so much about what works and what doesn't from living my 25 years of life with three different wives and many short and long relations in between! I could never be so wise if I had been with just one person: Why, I'm divorced 3 times so you don't have to be! You can stay with your mate if it's working ok, or at least if your partner's up to working things through! But back to my hard won wisdom...

It was after my third divorce that I realized that I always arranged everything in our world in order for them to be happy! I'm a committed, strong, independent person who has oceans of passion and love to offer. We go out, we fall in love, and next thing I know, I find myself in the back seat of my life! But they don't put me there! I go there! Because I think I should not do that, or I should not say that because that would upset them. So I become suppressed, and right after that I build resentments. Is this sounding familiar to any of you?

What Love Has To Do With It

Now, let's talk about the vacation scenario. In my vacations I have been to Puerto Vallarta, England, Barbados, Greece, Grand Cayman, the beautiful mountains of Oregon and Seattle, and all over Iran and United States, with my wives or my girl friends and my children or their children or some combination thereof. I always did what they wanted and what they needed. If I wanted to do something and they would say NO, I would say OK. Why? Because I didn't want to "rock the boat". Or on the other side, in some cases they might try to make me happy, so they'd say Yes to everything that I wanted or needed and then they became upset or resentful! And you know the end of story! Right after the resentment, here come The Decisions! They don't love me! They don't care about me! I'm not good enough, or something like that! Can you see yourself doing that? And not just in vacations, but in life in general?

Bottom line to the head trips we go on: if you're not happy with yourself, you won't be happy with anyone else. So recently I made some changes. I went on a vacation with two of my greatest friends – a couple I've known for years, and we love and respect each other. We're a winning combination! How?

We are holding each other responsible for our own happiness and fulfillment. We are speaking to each other straight and with no walking over egg shells. We deal with the core issue, not with all the noise around it. And we don't hesitate to smack each other over our heads and say "Wake up jerk!" when necessary. Given these commitments we established through years of personal development and time together, and given our clear understanding that we alone are responsible for our happiness, we had one of our best vacations ever! I had a great time with my friends doing what I wanted, when I wanted...and when I asked them if they wanted to do the same

thing or go the same place and they said YES – perfect...and when they said NO – perfect! I didn't need them to be happy, nor did they need me to be fulfilled...so everyone had a great time.

So, to summarize the advice I have sweated, smiled, pushed, twisted, carried, or cajoled out of wives, airlines, cars, hotels, swimming pools, dinner reservations, and a hundred thousand miles of no regrets:

Before planning your vacation, learn the following – some of which will need your great commitment and time...some of which will stretch you past your fears and needs to dominate and our lack of faith in them, and into understanding and respect for yourself and of others (– you know, those others who are basically learning about themselves through you...)

1. Know what is important to you and why.
2. Understand what happiness is to you and why.
3. Look and see if you think they owe you anything (like your expectations of them)
4. Speak up about what is important to you.
5. Respect others' points of view and opinions.
6. Get to know yourself and your shortcomings as a human being.
7. Learn about what upsets you and why.
8. Understand that your upsets are caused by you and nobody else.
9. Understand that if they are upset, it is not about you (unless you have some broken promises or agreements with them).
10. Acknowledge your broken promises and agreements and re-promise them.
11. Create an empowering outcome for the vacation that includes everyone (and that means you, too).
12. Know it is not going to happen if you are not doing it!
13. And remember you cannot be happy with anyone if you are not happy with yourself.

I have given you my baker's dozen of sweet little secrets for maximum fun. But let me leave you with one last gift for my collection of quotes:

“Happiness is not an accident. Nor is it something you wish for. Happiness is something you design.”

I wish you lots and lots of joy and fun designing your next summer vacation – or winter or spring or fall. And as we say in the old country, “Safar be khair,” meaning have safe and healthy trip!