



THE CALM *Family* TRAVEL GUIDE

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Evidence-Based Strategies for
Stress-Free Vacations with Kids

TABLE OF CONTENTS



CHAPTER 1

PREPARE FOR SUCCESS

Set the foundation for a smoother trip by preparing your child, packing strategically, and creating predictable routines before you leave home.

CHAPTER 2

MAKE TRAVEL EASIER

Learn practical, evidence-based strategies to encourage cooperation, handle transitions, and keep your child engaged throughout your journey.

CHAPTER 3

NAVIGATE CHALLENGING MOMENTS

Discover how to respond calmly during meltdowns and avoid unintentionally reinforcing behaviors you don't want to see again.

CHAPTER 4

PUT YOUR PLAN INTO ACTION

Finish your guide with practical tools you can use before every trip, including a personalized travel plan, a packing checklist, and resources for additional support.

CHAPTER *One*

Prepare for Success

Set the foundation for a smoother trip by preparing your child, packing strategically, and creating predictable routines before you leave home.

–Welcome

–Before You Leave: Set Your Child Up
for Success

–Pack for Success



welcome

Family vacations are supposed to be memorable for all the right reasons. But even exciting trips can be challenging for children. Long lines, unfamiliar places, disrupted routines, and waiting can all affect behavior.

The good news is that most travel-related behavior challenges can be prevented before they begin.

This guide combines the science of behavior with practical, everyday strategies that help children succeed in airports, hotels, restaurants, theme parks, road trips, and everywhere in between.

Small changes before your trip can make a big difference once you're there.

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BEFORE YOUR LEAVE:

Set your child up for success

Children are more successful when they know what to expect.

A few days before your trip:

- ✓ Tell your child where you're going.
- ✓ Show pictures of the airport, hotel, beach, cruise ship, or destination.
- ✓ Talk through what the travel day will look like.
- ✓ Practice wearing headphones or sitting in a stroller if needed.
- ✓ Let your child pack one or two favorite comfort items.
- ✓ Review any family expectations in a calm, positive way.

The more predictable the experience feels beforehand, the less overwhelming it usually becomes.

BCBA Tip

Most challenging behaviors happen because children are surprised, overwhelmed, or unsure of what comes next. Preparing them ahead of time is one of the most effective ways to prevent problems before they start.

PACK FOR SUCCESS

A well-packed travel bag can prevent countless behavior challenges.

Consider bringing:

- Favorite snacks
- Water bottle
- Small toys
- Sticker books
- Coloring supplies
- Magnetic games
- Downloaded movies
 - Headphones
 - Fidget toys
 - Comfort item
 - Extra clothes
 - Wipes
- Portable charger

Instead of giving your child everything at once, save some activities as surprises throughout the day.

Novelty keeps children engaged much longer than giving them every activity at the beginning of the trip.

Parent Pro Tip

Wrap a few dollar-store toys like birthday presents. Opening something new every hour can make long travel days feel much shorter.

CHAPTER *Two*

Make Travel Easier

Learn practical, evidence-based strategies to encourage cooperation, handle transitions, and keep your child engaged throughout your journey.

- Make Cooperation Worth Repeating
- Handle Transitions Before They Become Battles



MAKE COOPERATION WORTH REPEATING

Children repeat behaviors that work well for them.

When your child is:

- Waiting patiently
- Using a calm voice
- Following directions
 - Being flexible
 - Sharing
- Recovering after disappointment

Notice it immediately.

Instead of saying:

"Good job."

Try saying:

"I love how patiently you're waiting."

"You handled that change so well."

"Thank you for using such a calm voice."

"You were so flexible when our plans changed."

Specific praise teaches children exactly what you'd like
them to do again.





HANDLE TRANSITIONS BEFORE THEY BECOME BATTLES

Many travel meltdowns happen during transitions.

Instead of surprising your child with:

"It's time to go."

Try preparing them ahead of time.

Examples:

"First we'll eat lunch. Then we'll go to the airport."

"In five minutes we'll leave the playground."

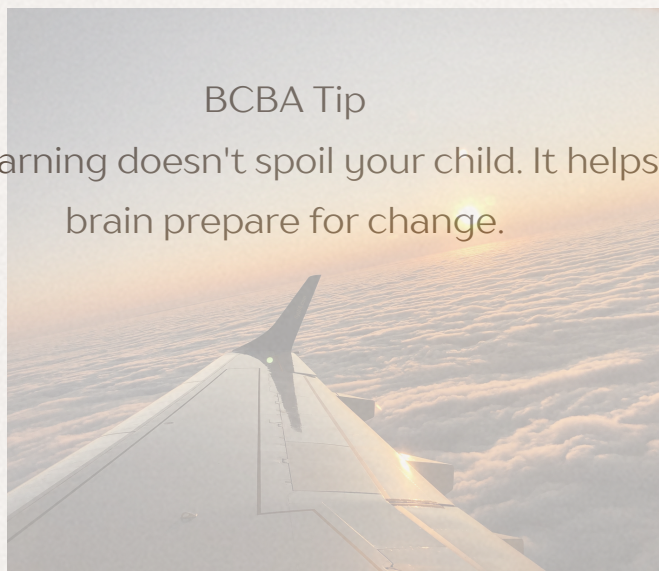
"After security, we'll find our gate."

Children often cooperate better when they know what's coming next.

Visual countdowns, phone timers, and simple reminders can make transitions feel much easier.

BCBA Tip

Giving a warning doesn't spoil your child. It helps their brain prepare for change.



CHAPTER *Three*

Navigate Challenging Moments

Discover how to respond calmly
during meltdowns and avoid
unintentionally reinforcing behaviors
you don't want to see again.

-What to Do During a Meltdown

-Don't Accidentally Teach Bigger
Meltdowns



What To Do During A Tantrum

EVEN WITH PREPARATION, DIFFICULT
MOMENTS HAPPEN

When they have a tantrum:

Stay calm.

Speak softly.

Use fewer words.

GIVE YOUR CHILD A LITTLE
SPACE IF IT'S SAFE.

Move somewhere quieter if possible.

Avoid long lectures while emotions are high.

ONCE YOUR CHILD BEGINS CALMING DOWN,
PRAISE THE FIRST CALM BEHAVIOR YOU
NOTICE.

"I like how you're taking deep breaths."

"Thank you for calming your body."

Children learn best after they feel calm and safe.





Don't Accidentally Teach Bigger Tantrums

WITHOUT REALIZING IT, PARENTS SOMETIMES
TEACH BEHAVIORS TO HAPPEN MORE OFTEN.

For example:

Child screams for candy.

Parent immediately buys candy.

THE CHILD LEARNS:

"Screaming works."

INSTEAD, STAY CALM AND FOLLOW
THROUGH WHEN IT'S APPROPRIATE TO DO
SO.

As soon as your child asks appropriately, waits patiently, or accepts your
answer, give lots of attention and praise.

*Children naturally repeat behaviors that
consistently work.*



CHAPTER *Four*

Put Your Plan into Action

Use printable tools to prepare for your next trip and learn how to get personalized support if your family needs additional guidance.

- Travel Behavior Plan
- Before You Go Checklist
- Need More Personalized Support

TRAVEL BEHAVIOR PLAN

Before your next trip, take five minutes to make a plan.

DESTINATION:

WHAT SITUATIONS MIGHT BE
DIFFICULT?

WHAT ACTIVITIES WILL I PACK?

WHAT REWARDS WILL MOTIVATE MY
CHILD?

WHAT CALMING STRATEGIES
USUALLY HELP?

WHAT PHRASES WILL I USE?
EXAMPLE:
"FIRST SECURITY, THEN SNACK."

BEFORE YOU GO CHECKLIST

Before your next trip, take five minutes to make a plan.

- ☐ Favorite comfort item
 - ☐ Snacks
 - ☐ Water bottle
 - ☐ Activities
 - ☐ Headphones
 - ☐ Chargers
 - ☐ Extra clothes
 - ☐ Wipes
 - ☐ Medication
 - ☐ Blanket
- ☐ Downloaded shows
- ☐ Visual schedule (if helpful)
 - ☐ Travel documents
 - ☐ Patience
 - ☐ Flexibility

REMEMBER:
YOUR GOAL ISN'T A PERFECT
VACATION.
YOUR GOAL IS HELPING YOUR CHILD
BE AS SUCCESSFUL AS POSSIBLE.

*Need More Personalized
Support?*



BLUE BOLT

— PEDIATRIC CARE —

EVIDENCE BASED PARENT COACHING

Calmer days. Stronger connections.

Every child is different.

If vacations, restaurants, public outings, or everyday routines consistently lead to challenging behavior, personalized parent coaching can make a meaningful difference.

At Blue Bolt Pediatric Care, we help parents understand why behavior happens and teach practical, evidence-based strategies that fit into everyday life. Whether you're preparing for your next vacation or looking for calmer days at home, we're here to help.

Book your consultation today.
blueboltpediatriccare.com

