

Going On a Summer Holiday

Notes for Brendan O'Connor Show | July 2nd, '23 | Tony Bates

Why do we need a holiday? / Where are we now?

We're still Post-Covid – We're catching up.

A generation of young people drawing their breath, socially anxious, stepping back into the world.

Work settings are adapting to new work routines/arrangements.

Some work practices have fallen back into remote, distant client engagement rather than more personal interactive practices.

Health services catching up on waiting lists and backlogs of medical procedures that had to be postponed.

We are tired!

We need to recognise this and not expect our fatigue to vanish once we board the plane, boat or train or check into our summer accommodation. When we stop, we feel our tiredness. Give yourself 2-3 days to transition to feeling half-human.

What holidays meant in the old days vs what they mean today

My personal memories of a 6-hour drive to Cork with one child being sick in the back seat of a Renault 4 and the other three fighting for their space, stopping (halfway) at Portlaoise.

Vs

Modern arrangements often involve several generations sharing a holiday where accommodations are rented close together.

Environments must be carefully chosen; individual needs and food preferences must be accommodated and tolerated. Some people need rest and quiet some need novelty adventure. Some need to step away from the fun and chill occasionally.

Holidays are about building memories and connections. What is important is being in an environment that allows and supports connections.

Planning Ahead

Before we leave, preferably as we are planning ahead with people for this holiday, consider what it is we most need from this break, what we are most looking forward to it.

Be mindful of the very different needs that different people have.

One of the things we do as a family with children and grandchildren is to ask people what their favourite thing they did today was. We also asked them what they did not like or found challenging.

We found that children value both novelty and repetition. There are activities they look forward to in Sligo every year – painting stones and bringing them to a forest where other children leave painted stones and simple sculptors – but they also need activities that widen their horizons. Often these are not at all appealing at first, but the following year, they are the number one thing they look forward to

Resist trying to live up to media myths.

Don't put down your own holiday because it doesn't seem to measure up to some exotic high bar. Don't buy into media myths.

I'm thinking about someone who hears what some friend or relative did on their holiday that sounded so cool. Their photos were impressive. Everything - including the people – looked perfect.

And that person wonders, 'Why isn't my/our holiday that wonderful?'

This is your holiday. Do what makes it work for you and the people you care about.

There may be circumstances where that isn't an option for you and your family. That's OK. Make the most of what you've got. Climb a mountain you've always been curious about. Walk to the end of that pier. In every environment, there are possible new adventures. Push out the boat a bit and see what you discover.

People in the family with special needs

Some families have challenges regarding holidays that need thought and advance planning, such as caring for an elderly parent with dementia. Just be aware that when that person is at home in their

familiar environment, they may manage reasonably well, but when taken into a new environment, their difficulties may become more evident. If you have them with you, choose simple activities and monitor how relaxed or distressed they are. If you yourself need a break, consider what might make this possible—having a sibling come live with them or contacting a group like Family Carer's Ireland. You may need a break as a carer. Maybe it's important that you make sure you take one.

We need routine and structure in our lives, but we also need breaks in our routines. Each person, each couple, and each family have their own particular circumstances to consider.

Nature is bountiful at the moment. Trees, shrubs, fruit bushes and plants are bursting. This is their time, and they are not afraid to enjoy their generativity to go OTT. We also need times when we give ourselves permission to experience the sheer pleasure of being alive. There will be darkness and chilly months ahead, but this is the time to store pleasurable experiences and memories that can sustain us through the winter months.

Some (relevant) research on 'What makes us Happy?'

Happiness depends on more than income. Researchers identified, as they had in previous years, that nations are happier when their citizens are in good health and free to choose what to do with their lives.

In the World Happiness Report 2016, they found three other traits that go with national happiness:

1. Social support – having people I can count on in my life
2. Benevolence - Being caring of and generous to others
3. Corruption: 'Whether they perceive the business in their country as corrupt' (Stephen Pinker, 2019)

Trust in the social fabric of whatever community/society we live in is connected to our well-being. Researchers found that a lack of fairness, which they referred to as 'corruption', was highly associated with unhappiness. Unfairness, corruption, and injustice weaken the social fabric of society. Money is not the issue. Trust in the social fabric of this community, society, and organisation is critical to my being happy to be part of it.

World Happiness Report 2022, based on 146 countries, found a slight increase in overall well-being (Reduced in young people but higher in over 60s).

“Life satisfaction has fallen for the young, while for those over 60, it has risen – with little overall change. Worry and stress have risen – by 8% in 2020 and 4% in 2021 compared with pre-pandemic levels.

The pandemic brought not only pain and suffering but an increase in social support and benevolence. As we battle the ills of disease and war, it is essential to remember the capacity of individuals to rally to each other’s support in times of great need.” WHR 2022

Nobel prize-winning psychologist Daniel Kahneman summarised his research on well-being as something that is boosted by three factors:

- *Being with people who accept us*
- *Being close to nature*
- *Being active*