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# Road Tripping with My Kid

How to plan a getaway that won't overwhelm or bore your teen with ADHD.

Q

I'm going on a road trip to visit my parents and have decided to take my son, who has ADHD. I'm a little nervous. We need some quality time together, but I don't want to overwhelm him. What should I plan?

THERE IS NOTHING LIKE GRABBING A PRECIOUS opportunity to spend one-on-one time with your child. I remember taking my son on a similar road trip when he was 16. It was eye-opening!

Here are the lessons I learned while road-tripping with my ADHD teen.

**1 Get loose.** My son and I have opposite travel styles. He's a go-with-the-flow traveler while I had planned every inch of this trip: what we'd see and do, where we'd eat, etc. However, I caught on very quickly.

The relaxed, easy look on Eli's face got me thinking, "Maybe I need to dial it back."

So I loosened the reins, gave Eli more control over what we did, and allowed more spontaneity to fill our days. We ended up grabbing last-minute tickets to a basketball game, which was one of the highlights of the trip.

**2 Recharge and refuel.** I like to go all day and make every minute away from home count. My son? Not so much. He needed breaks to relax and recharge. I needed to respect that. Finding cafes for a coffee or ice cream break usually did the trick.

**3 Foster freedom.** The more independence I gave Eli, the more he rose to the occasion. There were times on the trip when I needed to work, so we headed back to the hotel midday. After being dooped up for a few hours, he asked if he could go exploring on his own. After making my parameters crystal clear and making sure his phone was fully charged, I sent him off to explore. Later that evening over dinner, he admitted he had to keep

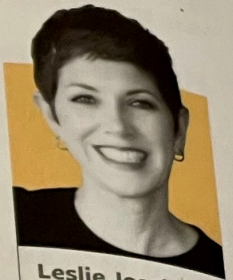
track of a lot, but he never felt that things were out of control.

**4 Space out.** We needed a break from each other from time to time. So when Eli put his headphones over his ears after we got back to our hotel room at night, I didn't take it personally. I needed to respect his space and his need to retreat.

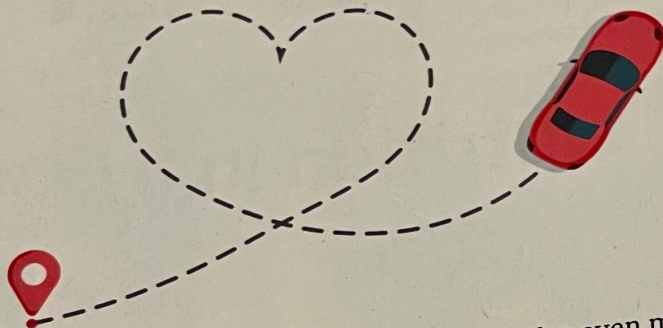
**5 Set boundaries.** Establishing reasonable rules for both of us really helped. For him: no phone while I was driving. I wanted him to stay engaged and keep me company. For me: no popping into charming stores endlessly. We cheated a bit here and there but that helped us to respect the rules even more.

**6 Spark interest.** A constant barrage of new information coming all day long isn't Eli's thing. This is true for most individuals with ADHD. While I am an information junkie and read every display at a museum, he likes to get the feel of the place first and do a deep dive in one or two select spots. But give him a museum or tour where he already had an interest? Well, let's just say we strummed guitars and ukuleles for hours at the Gibson factory in Memphis.

**7 Cherish the connection.** We did our deepest talking, hardest laughing, best singing, loudest fighting, unhealthiest snacking, and most peaceful thinking in the car. It was never about the destination, only the journey.



Leslie Josel is an ADHD coach specializing in the development of strong executive function skills in students with ADHD. She is also founder of Order Out of Chaos and a long-time contributor to ADDitudeMag.com.



## ROAD RULES

Tested travel tips for ADHD families: [additu.de/trip](http://additu.de/trip)