

What to Expect from a Vacationing Autistic

By Jason Oldford

“Vacation, meant to be spent alone.” (The Go-Gos)

Well, the Go-Gos may have been right in reference to autistic adults. They like to vacation alone, but what about children?

From personal experience, I didn't like family vacations. Too much time spent outside and not enough time reading and learning. A lot of autistic children don't like this combination; could be because school's out and they have to change routines to one that involves being out of the house more. Childhood vacations took me anywhere from Ottawa to Cape Breton or even to Prince Edward Island. I actually enjoyed my vacations to our nation's capital: I remember tours of the Royal Canadian Mint and the Parliament Buildings, not to mention the Museum of Science and Technology. However, things like beaches and other summer activities such as time at the cottage just weren't my thing. I felt miles from civilization. However, when you're a child you can't do your own thing. You go where your parents and siblings go, and you at least try to enjoy it. However, let me give you an example: Some autistic children can really be into reading or playing PlayStation. They can't spend their summers doing it, however; they need sunshine and to be outside. They can't waste away a beautiful day; they can do those types of things when it rains or it's really hot. So, what would my advice to parents be? Maybe find a nice way to tell them they need to get outside, and they can do the things they enjoy later.

During adulthood, though, things are different. More often than not when I vacation I do so alone, and I too am an indoors type. I go to museums quite frequently, even on the nicest days. It's where I go to learn things, to do what I like. If I go golfing, who would I go with? If I go to a beach or a pool, who'd put sunscreen on my back so I don't burn? When I lie on the beach in an attempt to get my back tanned, I'll put a shirt on to prevent burning. I try not to spend too much time in the water for the same reason. On the other hand, many autistic adults would rather have someone vacation with them, especially if they want someone with them if they get into situations where they don't know what to do.

Anyway, for adults, vacation could very well be meant to be spent alone, but for children, if they don't enjoy the outdoors or outdoor activities, get them outside and make it sound fun. They just might try it and like it. Enjoy your summer, no matter where your activities take you.



About the Author

My name is Jason Oldford. I work as a translator for Lionbridge. I have been on the autism spectrum since the 1970s, and back then not much was known about autism. I learned to read by the time I turned three so I guess you could say I got a head start as I entered school. I was a year late doing that, but it was for the better.

Although I am one of your shy, introverted types of autistics, I do have a knack for memorizing things like license plate numbers, dates, facts and figures, and I fell in love with pop music at a young age. I love listening to countdown shows from the 80s, remembering the old songs, and being able to count them down from 20 to 1 with computer-chip accuracy (and remembering the numbers of some memorable tunes further down the charts).