

Don't Trip Up When You Travel

There's stress, and then there's travel-related stress. Take the advice of some veteran travelers—and trainers—of how to cope with the on-the-go nature of your job.

By LESLIE KELLY and DIANE E. KIRrane

Travel is considered an incentive, a reward, by many office-bound professionals. But when trainers find travel a more-than-sometime thing, they quickly learn the perils of a peripatetic work life. Consultants are more frequently afflicted by travel stress, but it also strikes corporate training managers—like when they're called on to visit a dozen company outposts in two weeks. Fortunately, trainers are naturally inquisitive and professionally adept at needs analyses and problem solving. So, trainers who've "been there" (and darn near everywhere) have worked out ways to avoid or cope with the potholes in a life on the road.

East is east and west is west, but which end is up?

San Franciscan Carl Cheney warns that you can become disoriented by travel, fatigued, even exhausted. Don't wind up in that condition. To put your trip in order, start with a valuable ally: a travel agent. A good one will arm you with information to fortify your sense of control: a clear itinerary, easy-to-read maps, and written confirmations of airplane, car rental, or

hotel reservations. If you want training rooms with, say, access for handicapped persons or adequate wiring for demonstration equipment, professional agents can search special data bases to find just what you need. Agents that belong to the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA) can give a beginning globe-trotter a sheaf of brochures on topics ranging from "How to be a Smart Traveler," "Car Rental," "Overseas Travel," and "Traveling Safely" to "Packing Tips."

Fights before flights

Speaking of packing, mobile trainer Morris Massey decided that the anguish of choosing what and how to pack made a poor start for his trips. Former dean of the business school at the University of Colorado, Massey has been a speaker in demand since he filmed "Where You Are Now is Where You Were When" back in 1975. To tame his closets, he sought expert advice. A specialist from Creative Closets interviewed him for six hours, then set to work tossing unsuitable suits out of his wardrobe and rearranging his closet in four categories: casual, business, dress business, and dress social. His adviser even got his socks and underwear in order. Finally, the expert sent Massey on a planned shopping spree (Don't you want this to happen to you?) for a color-coordinated, two-of-everything, and everything-of-good-quality wardrobe—including two watches so if one's being

cleaned or repaired, the other's ready to go. Now, once he's chosen his "color of the week," he can pack in 10 minutes for a week of travel.

Okay, assuming that you or an obliging significant other packs your gear, you next face the dreaded trip-within-a-trip: the journey to the airport. Nobody wants to leave home too early, and nobody wants to cut it too close. There's no consensus about how to handle this, only the Delphic oracle's prescription "Know thyself."

Some trainers drive themselves; it heightens their sense of being in command. Others prefer to be driven by taxi or limousine driver, family member, or friend. Then if the taxi or whatever falls apart en route, the happy wanderer can abandon it and seek other transport.

Local weather conditions and the quality of the nearest airport also affect the traveling trainer's frame of mind. When Massey left the University of Colorado, he opened an office in Boulder. His office, ably handled by Diane Drake, is still there, but Massey isn't. His upbeat attitude just couldn't conquer Denver's downpours and snowstorms. Massey went to grad school at Louisiana State University, and he kept up friendships with people who stayed in that area. Several years ago, those old school ties, a more temperate climate, and a better airport combined to convince Massey and his family to move to New Orleans.

Transferring to another town may sound drastic at first, but consider these

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statistics: *In Search of Excellence* and *A Passion for Excellence* coauthor Tom Peters was on the road 225 days in 1984; Chicago attorney ("Everyone's a Negotiator") Herb Cohen, 220. Many successful, but less well-known, trainers also face a trip to the airport week in and week out and, from that perspective, Massey's kind of move looks smart.

At the airport, some trainers avail themselves of the benefits of an airline "club." Membership is based on payment of an initiation fee (usually \$100 or so) and annual dues (in the \$75 range). United Airlines' "Red Carpet Club" offers benefits similar to those of about 10 domestic and several international airlines. For the traveling trainer's peace of mind, the most important benefit is use of a less public, more attractive waiting area. The club at a given airport may have trappings like a restaurant, color TV, and private office space. But the real nonaction will be in the equivalent of United's "Pacific Rooms," where travelers are quietly pampered before and between flights.

Whether at an airline club or mingling with the masses, you might try one training manager's technique for whiling away the time when waiting to make connections: read a murder mystery. "I may not be going anywhere for the moment, but the poor stiff from Chapter 1 *never* is," she says. If mysteries don't calm you, you could take up crossword puzzles, needlepoint, or some other portable pastime. Of course, there's *always* professional reading to keep up with.

If you need motion sickness medicine, plan to take it on the ground so its active ingredients have time to take effect. For what it's worth, Concorde-class jet-setter David Frost recommends "a seat in the middle of the plane, right between the wings" as a nonchemical cure for the queasies.

About check-in: you should already have—via your travel agent, airline club receptionist, or overworked self—a boarding pass. The big question is what to do with luggage and work material. Ideally, bulky work material has already winged its way to your hotel. And you have confirmed its arrival by speaking to a hotel staffperson—someone who did *not* remain nameless but promised to be personally responsible for seeing to it that you and the material meet again.

Alas, it's not an ideal world. Your handouts, questionnaires, or proposals may not be ready until the last minute; your would-be hotel helper may call in sick; and the airline may lose your luggage. So resign

yourself to carrying on at least enough work material, clothes, and toiletries to "get by." Many on-the-go trainers never check their luggage. Instead, they spend money for sturdy, lightweight carry-on bags, then save money and time previously spent on porters and at luggage carrousel.

Ease aloft

Sooner or later, you'll board the plane. With an upgrade for "frequent flier" certificates, a little luck, or a big expense account, you'll settle into a fairly comfortable first-class seat.

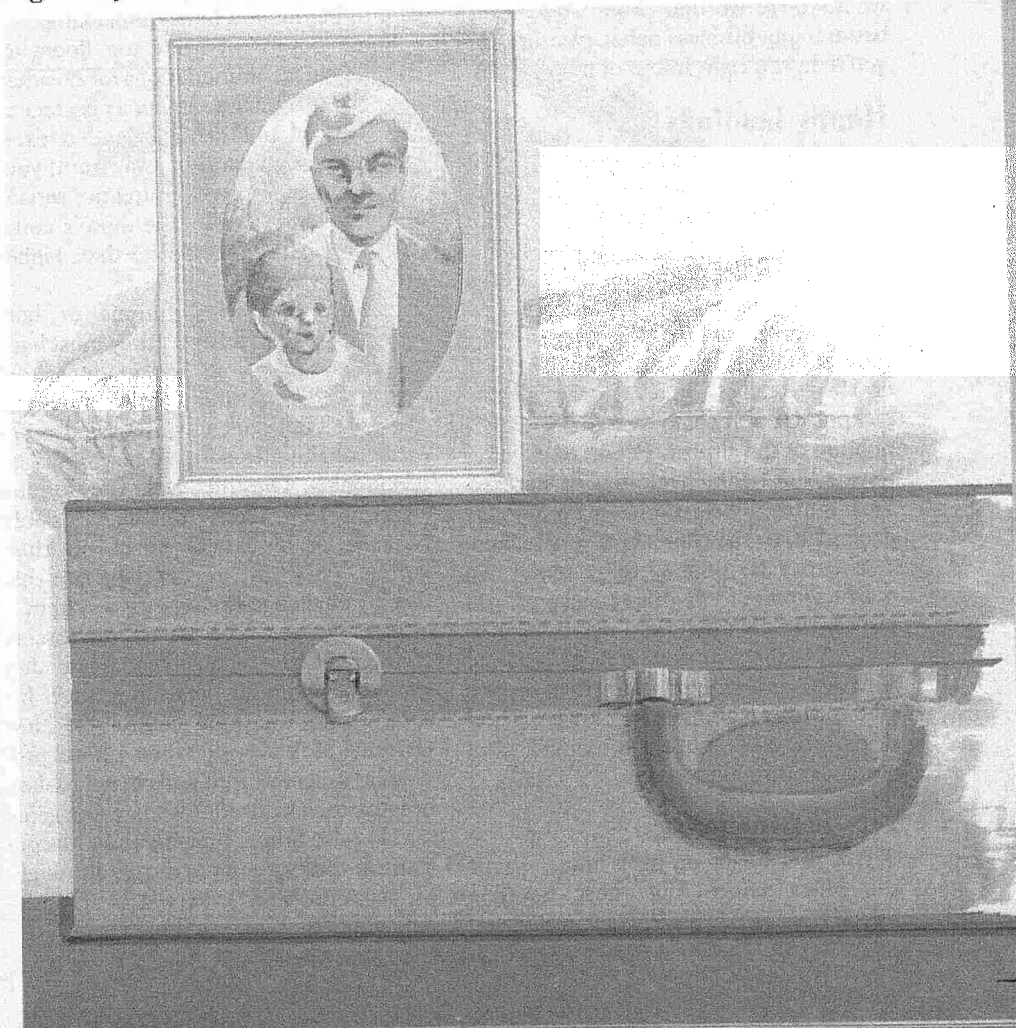
If your trip's a once-a-year event lasting weeks, you might be tempted to try to reset your "biological clock" to suit the time at your destination. There are several diet and bedtime adjustment schemes that claim to do that. But their validity is unproven. Besides, it isn't easy to fool Mother Nature and, for short or frequent trips, the shift attempt would take more time to accomplish than you have.

Dr. Thomas Roth from Detroit's Henry Ford Hospital Sleep Center says east-bound travel is more wearing than west-bound. "It's easier for your body to adjust to travel into a time zone that requires going to sleep later," he says. Still, the pure

number of travel hours counts. In other words, don't go—literally—out of your way to travel westward. Roth explains that, although napping in transit can lessen your sleep loss, "jet lag" is more than sleepiness. Roth, who has a one-and-a-half-day business trip to Paris coming up, says that for such a short stay he's "not interested in adjusting to French time; I'm interested in staying awake." His solution will be to take a sleeping pill at bedtime. But he tells the travel weary to beware of the dangers of relying on pills for more than two or three nights.

If your flight's three or more hours long, keep your blood circulating with low-key exercise. Walk down the aisle, pausing for several deep knee-bends before returning to your seat. Do ankle circles. Practice tensing and relaxing your shoulder, buttock, and thigh muscles. Turn your head from side to side. Hug yourself. Stretch your arms overhead.

But don't reach for a cocktail. The humidity in an airplane is about one-fifteenth what your body's used to, and alcohol, coffee, and tea all hasten dehydration. Drink water or juice to fight it. You may need eye drops, especially if you wear contact lenses. If a flight attendant offers you a steamy towel, take it and give your



sinuses a break from the dryness by inhaling some of the vapor. For your face and hands, wear moisturizer. Most women own some and, now that it's marketed in grey bottles that look as masculine as after-shave, many men do too.

Airline food isn't as bad as it used to be, thank goodness. Still, Morley Safer of "60 Minutes" is reputed to carry a small bottle of Dijon mustard to dab on anything he

to new surroundings and beat the blues.

Massey (like popular psychologist Dr. Joyce Brothers) brings his own pillow to hotels. Other trainers admit to needing a familiar photo, clock, or other trinket on display before they feel at home in a hotel. Miami-based Dr. Eric Goldstein, a stress management specialist for executives and athletes, says that pictures of family members (like telephone calls home) "can

If mysteries don't calm you, you could take up crossword puzzles, needlepoint, or some other portable pastime

wants to disguise the looks or taste of. Overcome the urge to eat a mountain of food just because it's there. If you need special meals for religious or health reasons, let the airline know at the time you book your flight. Or mimic TV chef Julia Child who brings her own fresh fruit, cheese, and salads on board.

Between naps, meals, and bouts of exercise, you can either work (read, dictate business letters, listen to instructional tapes, write plans) or relax (sleep, read, write personal letters, listen to music, watch a movie). What you *can't* do is relax when you're worried about work, so it's better to put business before pleasure until you're in the right frame of mind to rest.

Happy landings

As you disembark, trundling your wheeled suitcase or escorting a porter, you may head for a taxi, airport "limo" (minibus), or snazzy company limousine. If so, you need pocket money for fare and tips.

On the subject of money: If credit cards won't cover most of your expenses, carry traveler's checks and a blank bank check or two. Really, "what will you do?" if pickpocketed? It could happen here, in the hubbub of the airport. Put an emergency traveler's or bank check in your suitcase. Wear a money belt. Don't be completely dependent on the contents of your billfold.

You may be booked for a rental car, maybe as part of a fly-drive package. If you use rental cars often, you might want to join AAA (the Automobile Association of America) for their emergency road service and towing, trip-planning advice, good maps, traveler's check discounts, and rental car discounts.

Nesting instinct

"Anyplace I hang my hat is home," claims the blues singer. But most traveling trainers need to do more to get acclimated

to new surroundings and beat the blues. give some individuals a sense of security, but makes others homesick." Bring whatever it takes—your own soap, a scented candle, your favorite slippers—to make the room feel like *yours*.

Before unpacking, check the room's basic equipment. Do the heat and air conditioning work? The door lock, phone, lights, shower, and toilet? If not, get another room. Survey the amenities. If you need a blanket, ashtray, hanger, soap, roll of toilet paper, or something of the sort, call the hotel housekeeper immediately. Chances are, your request can be taken care of before you finish unpacking.

Some hotels set aside top floors for extra-posh accommodations for business travelers. If you want temporary secretarial help, use of photocopiers and telexes, meeting space near (but away from) your sleeping quarters, and the attentive service of a concierge, these super-hotels could win your patronage despite their higher prices.

Judging from descriptions of how trainers spend hotel time, they must have been *A* students in the grade school category "Uses time wisely." They go through all the work activities listed as on-plane possibilities and add new ones like telephoning. They meditate. They jog and swim. They rarely smoke, possibly because of smoking's effect on their voices. They eat, mostly light fare that doesn't challenge the digestive system.

Massey used to look up restaurants recommended by acquaintances but, after some disappointing meals, now saves his appetite for the good cooking of New Orleans. He's pleased when a hotel provides a "welcome" fruit and cheese basket, because then he needn't worry about going out. He also brings "breakfast bars" to consume at their appointed meal—although, on occasion, they've served as an emergency lunch.

Star trek

Massey, like many trainers, prefers to be alone the night before a presentation. Public recognition is important for a trainer, but has its drawbacks. Privacy and time to concentrate on last-minute preparations help ward off the worst of the performance anxiety that trainers share with athletes and entertainers. Life in the public eye is not your own. As one trainer put it, "They probably believe you sleep in your suit." The high stress of high expectations is best met with high energy conserved until you're "on" for your client or company colleagues.

Ex officio

Because of your position, you have continuing obligations in your office. That doesn't mean you must be there in person. Remember Diane Drake and Morris Massey, working from Colorado and Louisiana respectively? They're respectfully aware of each other's roles. Drake prepares a weekly update to tell Massey who has expressed interest in his services and for when; Massey decides which to pursue. Drake follows up by providing any publi-

Beyond the Red, White, and Blue Horizon

Domestically well-traveled trainers have a head start on knowing how to prepare for foreign assignments. But, for overseas work, there are additional wrinkles and necessities, such as

- the need of a passport and, possibly, visas, work permits, or an international driver's license;
- different money to acquire and learn the value of;
- the importance of knowing (correctly) at least basic tourist phrases in the pertinent foreign languages and recognizing when the services of a professional translator are required;
- special physical concerns, like the need to get inoculations or adjust to high altitude;
- concerns about cultural protocol, politics, and legal differences;
- the need to adapt personal (hair dryers) and professional equipment (slide projectors) to different electrical voltages;
- the need for security precautions, especially if working in sensitive areas;
- more complex arrangements for communications with home and the home office.

city information or handouts needed. She gets information about Massey's in-town schedule for an engagement, makes his travel arrangements, and estimates related expenses. Immediately before each trip, she gives him a summary of the schedule and related plans. In fact, Massey doesn't have direct client contact until he arrives to make his presentation.

In *The Power of People Skills*, Doug Stewart predicts that an authoritarian manager who travels can expect employees to "behave like the proverbial mice." The absentee trainer needs to acknowledge that office life goes on and to delegate tasks *plus* the authority to get them done. Stewart reports that some managers rank decisions that (a) need to be made by the manager, (b) can be made by the employee with the manager's advice, (c) are to be made by the employee and reported to the manager, or (d) are to be made by the employee with no report.

When a trainer is out of town with clients or colleagues, they expect his or her full attention. That should mean *no* interruptions for home office matters. Stewart suggests establishing (in advance) specific times when you will get in touch with your office. Make "Don't call me, I'll call you" your motto.

If you run your office alone, answering machines, cellular phones, and laptop computers are devices designed to serve you long-distance.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch or condo

Life's still going on at home, too. Family, friendships, and flower gardens may thrive or go to seed in your absence. "Let us cultivate our garden," as Voltaire recommended—and our relationships, too.

Keep calls and letters flowing to family and friends. Resist second-guessing decisions and actions by a spouse or friends who couldn't reach you for advice in advance. If you have children, help them avoid the costly "What did you bring me?" syndrome. The right answer is "Me. Remember me, your loving mom/dad?" plus, for little kids, some hotel soap, stationery, or a map of where you've been and a homespun geography lesson.

Massey finds home a haven and an equalizer. He had to sacrifice family time early in his career but, now that he can be selective, limits himself to six or seven engagements a month. He tries to restrict travel to Tuesday through Thursday but, in any event, reserves weekends to spend with his wife and sons.

Massey says that after a while "all hotels look alike, room service tastes the same, and it's easy to forget what city you're in." Home is where you get honest "feedback." He consistently gets good reviews and evaluations of his work. Like many independent trainers, he misses the stimulation of peer interaction. He does learn from seminar participants and professional literature and derives energy from working with his staff. He views training as a unique career and demands the best of himself for it. But he's not likely to lose his sense of proportion. He says his twins can humble him in two minutes, and his wife reminds him that home "is not the Hyatt" if he wonders why the bedclothes aren't turned down with a mint on the pillow.

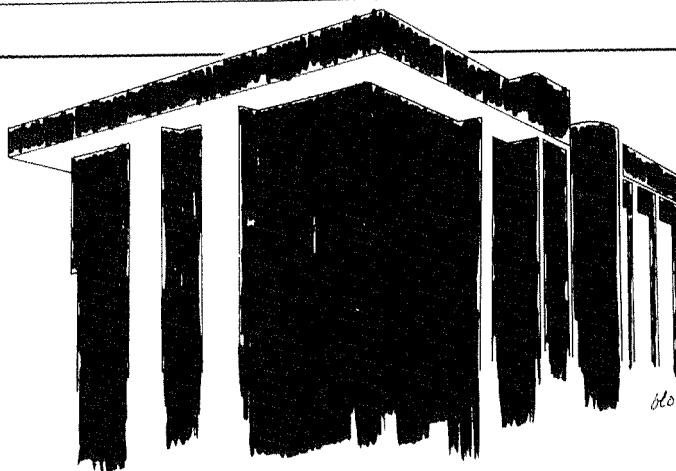
For the returning traveler, Dr. Goldstein suggests "a full day home for recuperation, if possible, before getting back to work." If you can't swing that, Goldstein says at least expect and plan for a brief drop in performance and efficiency. Don't get caught up in a negative cycle of tiredness, poor decisions, worry, and sleeplessness. Dr. Roth points out something we don't want to hear: adjusting takes a bit longer as we get older.

Back to Earth

Try to look on the completion of expense reimbursement forms as a chance to conduct a mental review of your grand tour. Then, get yourself psyched for a return to office routine—or *another* trip.

"The best stress reduction technique I know is to throw myself into my work, because I enjoy it," asserts Dr. Robert Lefton of Psychological Associates. Ah, yes—trainers are like that. Haven't you seen the lapel button that proclaims its wearer is "high on stress"?

And, what does Morris Massey do for vacations? In 1984, he spent the summer in Europe with his family. The following year, he and his sons spent a month in the Australian outback. Further proof that once you know how to manage the stress of travel, it's more exhilarating than depleting.




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