

## Tips For Coping With Depression While Traveling

(NAPSA)—According to a recent University of Phoenix® survey, 39 percent of respondents say they have personally experienced depression. With the holiday travel season under way, University of Phoenix social sciences program chairs Mary Jo Trombley, Ph.D., N.C.C., and DeAnna Henderson, Ph.D., L.P.C., N.C.C., say that living with chronic or situational depression can be challenging to handle, and travel can add additional burdens.

### What Is Depression?

The American Psychological Association defines depression as a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, the way you think and how you act. The association lists common symptoms of depression as including feelings of sadness or depression, change in sleep patterns and eating habits, loss of energy, feelings of fatigue, loss of interest in activities, and the inability to think, concentrate or make decisions.

According to Dr. Trombley, these symptoms can become exacerbated when traveling. She states that traveling should not be seen as a cure for depression. It can be a way to obtain temporary relief but worry, stress, pressure and loneliness are contributing factors to depression and are often present for travelers.

“Traveling comes with changes in routine, pressures of time commitments, and changes in eating, sleeping and exercising patterns,” Dr. Henderson added. “These changes can trigger a sense of not being in control and increase the sense of depression.”

### Tips for Traveling with Depression

Depression can be challenging. Drs. Trombley and Henderson provide the following strategies to help individuals cope when traveling.

**Plan ahead:** For someone who may be struggling with depression, it is best to plan for travel as opposed to making an impulsive trip. Plan as much of the trip as possible. Know your route and possible delays, and have snacks in case you are delayed. Build in enough time to travel through airports and security checkpoints if flying to your destination.

**Practice self-management:** Self-management is the ability to manage your personal reactions to responsibilities and challenges in work and life. This becomes critical during times of adapting to chang-



**You don't have to let the stress of travel make depression worse, experts advise.**

ing situations. Recognizing triggers and your body's response to unfamiliar and stressful situations can help keep depressive symptoms at bay.

### Use appropriate coping strategies:

Techniques that help people manage stressful and/or traumatic situations are coping strategies. These strategies can include the use of mindfulness, guided imagery, deep breathing exercises, and progressive muscle relaxation. Additionally, reaching out to support systems during this time can diminish feelings of loneliness during travel. Finally, the use of humor can be effective in reducing stress.

**Get a sufficient amount of sleep, exercise, and eat well:** Travel can be exhausting. It is important to maintain patterns of sleep and healthy eating while traveling. Moreover, the maintenance of an exercise routine can also help reduce stress and release endorphins while traveling. It is also important to limit alcohol consumption as alcohol is a depressant and may exacerbate depressive symptoms.

### Be realistic about your travel plans:

Recognize that even though you have planned your travel, unplanned situations can occur. Maintaining a flexible stance can reduce the amount of stress experienced if travel does not go as planned. Also, while travel may alleviate some depressive symptoms, do not be alarmed if your symptoms return once the travel has ended.

University of Phoenix is committed to training professional counselors who help treat depression and other mental health needs. Through programs like the Master of Science in Counseling with a specialization in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, University of Phoenix is helping individuals combat mental illness during the holidays and beyond.