



EXECUTIVE VITALITY™: BUSINESS TRAVEL VS. RELATIONSHIPS

According to the Global Business Travel Association, the average number of days an experienced business traveler is away from home on business travel per year is 48. That is more than 20% of annual workdays away from home. Younger business travelers travel more—84 days per year—more than a third of workdays away from home. And those are averages. We all know executives who are dragging that average way up from what it would be without them in the data.

Separation due to business travel can have adverse consequences for any relationship. Departure, re-entry, and things that don't get done when you are on the road all add stress to everyone involved.

Here are four steps you and your partner (and kids) can take to help alleviate this effect.

1. *Communicate.* The ability to communicate with your partner is essential. Effective communication is an entire book itself. The goal is to listen so as to learn and to ensure there is empathy for those keeping the home fires burning, as well as for the traveler.
 - a. Both of you need to act with respect to eliminate pain in the other person while honoring one's own dignity and requirements.
 - b. Ask the other party what they need from you.
 - c. Stay in touch daily, if possible, while on the road. If phone calls or Facetime, for example, are impossible, technology provides lots of other options.
2. *Establish boundaries.* Have an understanding with each other about what will be happening leading up to a trip and following a trip.
 - a. Many people who have been at home, while the other is away, want to go out for dinner when the partner returns home, while the traveler cannot wait to just eat a bowl of cereal on the couch.
 - b. Another common scenario is that the partner at home might want to shift child care to the returning traveler who might desperately need some "downtime."
3. *Organize.* Maintain a calendar for the year or as far as is known with all business and personal events, and appointments.
 - a. Plan the important events so that travel can be scheduled around family events to the extent possible.
 - b. Share the knowledge of upcoming business travel to the extent known so that surprises are eliminated or reduced.
4. *Reconnect.* Once re-entry is accomplished, make sure you have "together time," with your partner and/or family members.
 - a. Plan a hike, a picnic in the park, movie and dinner, a weekend away—whatever works in your situation.
 - b. Reconnection time will allow the opportunity to rebuild and reinforce relationships and perhaps discuss any issues that have emerged in the away time.

What road-warrior occurrences in your life could have gone better using some of these techniques? What else can you think of that has worked well for you that you should ensure are part of your travel checklist?