

# Limit travel anxiety this holiday season

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Holiday travel can be anxiety-inducing due to flight delays and heavy traffic. While disruptions are unavoidable, a Baylor College of Medicine expert provides tips on how to manage stress and anxiety during a busy travel period.

## Know your triggers

People who experience anxiety have different triggers, so pinpoint those triggers ahead of time for a smoother [travel](#) day.

"Triggers might include the uncertainty of traffic, [flight delays](#), being in [public places](#) or seeing friends and family for the holidays," said Dr. Asim Shah, professor and executive vice chair in the Menninger Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Baylor. "Based on your triggers, you can make a plan."

If traveling alone worries you, travel with a partner. Talk to your travel companion about your fears so they can help you alleviate stress. Use your stress management techniques, such as listening to soothing music, to mitigate anxiety.

## Prepare for travel

Get a good night's rest the night before traveling, eat healthy and avoid drugs and alcohol since they cause instability and can exacerbate anxiety. Shah also suggests exercising before traveling. The endorphins from exercise will calm you down and help rid anxiety and nervous energy.

"Have a plan, distract yourself and reassure yourself that you are safe," he said.

## Plan for traffic and delays

Those who are traveling shorter distances can opt for driving instead of flying, especially if you experience aerophobia. If you plan to travel by car, try not to drive during rush hour to limit [anxiety](#) about road rage and

traffic.

Shah provides tips to prepare for travel delays:

- Try to take morning flights and think about a backup [flight](#) in the event of cancelations.
- Travel with airlines that will automatically book you for the next flight.
- If your schedule permits, book your travel to arrive a day early so you avoid the risk of arriving at the last minute.
- Purchase travel protection plans for expensive flights.
- Take direct flights when possible and sign up for flight alerts to prevent arriving to the airport with a major delay or cancellation.
- If you check a bag, have some clothes and important items in your handbag or tote if your luggage gets lost.
- Bring items that will allow you to pass the time: read a book, watch a movie, catch up on work or anything else that will entertain and distract you.

"Don't waste time—get to the airport early to prepare for long lines and parking issues," Shah said.

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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