

Secrets Of Traveling With Kids

I'm smack dab in the middle (of the beginning) of raising 4 kids of all different (under 10) ages, and also their friends are around a lot, so we are constantly surrounded by young-uns! Of my many observations and trials and errors in trying to keep them all simultaneously calm and content, I have discovered a few secrets, *golden* secrets – so considered because of their miraculous success rates, at least in the under 10 set. Give me a few years (especially when the kids reach their teens), and I may have enough golden kid-contenting secrets to write a book, let's hope I learn some more anyway...

1. If you trace the roots of every kid tantrum and meltdown, you will find that most are derived from feelings of hunger, followed closely by fatigue and thirst; the latter two can be interchanged, it depends upon the kid. But the #1 reason is usually hunger. Keeping small, energy-boosting (and likable!) snacks on hand at all times can do wonders for the mood of the group.

2. Never underestimate the power of blankie. I keep those really thin blankies in my car – the ones they give you at the hospital when you're having a baby. They fold up so small, it's really not a big deal for me to keep a bag with 4 of them (1 per kid is important!) folded up and stashed under the front passenger seat. When we are returning home on a long drive or even when we're in the middle of a long day out, a sleepy (and full-stomached, see hint #1) kid can often be comforted and most often put to sleep by a blankie. Even the thin ones work like a miracle; I've seen it work for multiple ages, genders, and personalities. It's difficult for me to get used to, but I keep offering my son little stuffed animals to play with. I had 3 girl babies before him, and they all

loved stuffed animals. My son could care less, unless the stuffed animal still has its tag for him to rip off. But the blankie secret is effective even with him – he'll pull it up against his cheek and instantly get sleepy! If you don't have enough of the hospital blankies for each kid (and it's important they each have their own), I highly suggest you purchase other thin blankies for the car since they're inexpensive, especially when you consider how helpful they are. They come in packs of 4 or 5 for under \$10, I think... A key to helping this secret be effective is to make sure **you** retain control of the blankies – don't let the kids keep them in the back of the van or like anything else, the novelty will wear off, rendering the blankie ineffective. My kids know that the car blankies are just for “blankie emergencies”, and that policy helps to make sure I can keep them somewhat clean and stashed and ready for use.

So just remember, snacks and blankies can usually get you out of most kid-pinches, sometimes even calming kids who pinch, ha. At the very least, if you find yourself in charge of some crazy kids, plan ahead and do some light packing – these hints will buy you some time to think of a better plan!

Blankie Woes

I think 8 is too old for a blankie. I mean, it's ok to have one at that age, but only if it doesn't interfere with daily life. On February 19, I made a post in my blog about the same subject – the post is called Blankies. It's funny to read that post now and see how far we've come, yet we've also gone no where on this issue at the same time. My 8-year-old daughter has this raggedy blankie that goes everywhere with her... well, that's not accurate – it would if it could,

but I put the kabosh on that long ago. It got so bad that if we didn't remember it to go out to eat or walmart or somewhere simple like that, the whole family would pay the price. So, probably about a year ago now, I said, that's it, blankie stays home. I got tired of the liability involved also. If we brought it to a restaurant or anywhere for that matter and it got dirty, I would have to wash it immediately when we got home or else it wouldn't be ready for bed time that night, and my daughter would put up a huge fuss. Now it's gotten to the point where I'm worried it won't make it through the wash in one piece. Heck, it's barely in one piece as it is.

A few weeks ago, I said, it's time for the blankie to stay upstairs. It's only for bed and that's it. My daughter would bring it down in the morning, then she'd leave for school all day, and I got tired of tripping over it while doing housework. She hasn't been listening to that rule very well... and old habits die hard, I guess. The other day, she brought it downstairs and left it on the couch where little sister came and sat on it. Problem was, little sister had just wet the bed, so needless to say, blankie needed a wash. Somehow, I did not find out about this until bedtime that night, when a huge fuss was made about blankie not being available for bedtime. I was not about to do a load of laundry at 10 at night, especially on a Sunday, which is technically (though it never works out this way with a family of 5 almost 6 and 3 of them little kids), my day off laundry. Not only that, but the blankie would not have been ready for at least an hour anyway, and it was already bedtime. There was much struggle and lots of tears, but she did finally spend a night without her beloved blankie. And guess what? She survived unscathed!

A few weeks ago, she had a sleepover for girl scouts. The rules were, bring a sleeping bag or a blanket, so she planned on bringing her blankie, which is holey, threadbare, and of no use when it comes to keeping someone warm. Not only that, but she is at a good age for kids to start making fun of her for

something like that, and both my husband and I know from experience that kids do not forget things easily! She has a really nice sleeping bag that she's never actually gotten to use at a sleepover yet, so we convinced her to just bring that... or so we thought. She packed her own overnight bag, and I didn't think to check for contraband. The next day when I unpacked the overnight bag, I found the stowaway blankie. I felt so duped.

Ironically, as I'm writing this very post, my husband came downstairs and said, "Taylor can't find her blankie. She is really upset about it and crying." It was downstairs today, even though it wasn't supposed to be, so I know I had to add it to my huge load of laundry to bring upstairs... I told him to pass the message to Taylor that if I find it down here again, it will be gone forever because I am so sick of the whole situation. And I haven't done anything with it yet, honest, tempting as it may be. Don't get me wrong, I'm not mean or cruel, and I don't have a problem with kids needing a comfort item, even at 8. But when that item interferes with daily life, and one cannot function without it, then I believe it's time for a change. She should hope Dad or I don't find the blankie first – we are pretty fed up with the situation and cannot guarantee the safety of the blankie should we come across it!

Blankies

Did you catch Barney today? Probably not... but I did so I'll fill you in. Baby Bop lost her blankie, prompting much song and dance. Which got me to thinking... how old is too old for a blankie? Actually, this blog was inspired by my oldest daughter who is 8 and still has a blankie. I suppose it

doesn't sound like a big deal if I just put it that way, I mean, it's not like she carries it everywhere with her anymore... it was actually pretty easy to get her to stop bringing it places with us, thank goodness. But when we're at home, it's a different story. It IS carried everywhere around the house. And if, help us all, we should have misplaced the blankie somewhere during the day and she doesn't have it to sleep with at night – let's just say the ENTIRE family suffers until it is found... So... how old is too old for a blankie? Worse yet, our 3 1/2 year old is now figuring out what a wonderful power trip she can take if she holds blankie hostage, causing ever-growing conflict. Soon the 1 1/2 year old will be in on it too, probably just because she'll decide there has to be something awfully special about that blankie based on the way her sisters are acting, but still, we don't need any more conflict! I think I will surf the net and get some feedback about this subject... Dr. Phil once had a college-age guest on his show who still had her blankie. It was nothing but a tattered piece of material, and I remember him joking, "Does it keep you warm?" Hehe. I remember in the movie Mr. Mom, the dad decides the kid is too old to have a "whoopie". I think they burn it or something cruel like that... I would never do that, but I do worry that some day if I get frustrated enough, the blankie might meet some sort of tragic demise... So, is 8 too old for a blankie? She still sucks her thumb too, but that will be another blog all together!