It is summer and families are going on vacation. Vacations although well intentioned and anticipated can also put stress on a couple’s relationship.

Vacations can produce stress for many reasons. One of the most obvious and over- looked is the change in schedule that occurs while on vacation- more time spent together than usual with a change in everyday routine. We all get accustomed to being in routine and vacations can leave people feeling more anxiety. There may be little or no routine to structure the day, leaving decisions to be made to meet individual likings, seeking kid friendly activities and keeping everyone content. This can create stress and leave couples in conflict.

Here are some tips for creating less stress on your relationship to help you create a better likelihood for enjoyment and relaxation:

* Find a time to discuss and plan outings that you and your partner enjoy. Discuss this ahead of time, so if you disagree you can work on negotiating.
* If you disagree, bring it up in a direct but non confrontational way.
* Discuss ahead of time how you feel about spending time apart so to avoid hurting feelings. Does your partner need a break from child care, a chance to relax in his or her own way? Allow each partner some time for alone or down- time. This can be helpful in maintaining balance.
* Traveling with small children is challenging and stressful for couples. Remember that it is what is happening NOW and that it is OK. It will change as children get older and more self- sufficient.
* Create time for your relationship. Plan and follow through with physical and/or emotional intimacy. Do something you both enjoy after children are in bed or during naptime.
* Vacations often require more communication between couples and more flexibility for each other’s needs. For example, does your partner need to have more time to get ready to head out than you? Be aware of this and try to plan together.
* When things do not go as planned try to remember your sense of humor- setbacks and flexibility are a likely part of a vacation. Avoid blaming one another when things do not go exactly as planned.
* Know your limits and your children’s threshold for fatigue and over-stimulation. Try not to schedule too many activities in one day.
* If you must do some work, set aside time and ask your partner to support this.
* Practice “unplugging” from electronics for periods of time throughout the day and night.
* Be gentle with yourselves.
* Relax and breathe. Stay in the present moment as much as possible.