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Should You Bring Your Children on OVERSEAS VACATIONS

I have a dilemma. Before I became a parent, I spent quite some time with a successful entrepreneur back in Penang. Because I was a singer and musician, he usually invited me to karaoke session and disco dance floor and some great dining places. I also had some overseas vacation following him all over the place. In short, I spent quite a lot of "fun" time with him, who is like my big brother and mentor.

He has a son who was still studying in primary school at that point. What puzzled me is that he never brought his son along for all those fun activities. One day, I asked him why he never brought his son along. He candidly told me the reason. He didn't want the boy to enjoy too much. Before a kid knows how to make hard earned money, it is better not to pamper him.

I thought that is a great way to bring up my child. Let them have a hard time before they learn how to enjoy life. So I thought that I would be doing exactly that when I have my child.

Fast forward to the present day. His son had graduated from college and is now successful in his business. I admire the way he was brought up, nurturing the small kid to be a wise, mature, grateful and capable adult.

Now my son is in primary school. But I didn't follow exactly what my friend did to his son. For example, I travelled overseas each year. I've been to many countries for vacation including Mexico, the United States of America, New Zealand, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, Europe, South East Asia countries like Singapore, Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand. Most of the time, my son came along with us. As I was writing this from Vietnam, he was with me.

Of course, not just the vacation trip. We will also go

for fine dining, karaoke, luxury cruises, concert, etc. Guess what? He joined us most of the time. I am guilty as charged.

Instead of giving my kid a hard time so that he can learn to delay gratification, he gets to enjoy the material pleasure and life experience that money can bring, at such a young age. Am I a good parent? Should I feel guilty?

I discussed with my wife this dilemma. "My dear, are we spoiling our child? I remembered the first time I went to a foreign country was when I studied in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia at Skudai. When I visited Singapore, my parents still didn't have their passports", I said.

I then added, "if we keep on taking our kid to all these fancy places and pamper him, would it make him spendthrift? When he grows up and can't make enough to sustain the lifestyle he was used to having, isn't it bad?"

When that happens, he will have to seek financial support from us. He will be a dependent or our parasite forever. Shouldn't we be worried about this potential risk?

In contrast, my wife looks at this matter through a different lens. She said, "we brought him along so he can bring more excitement to us during the trip. We don't have to think about how he is doing back home. We don't get to miss him! We

don't need to call back or Facetime every night because he is right beside us."

She just right out knocked on my big dumb head. That's the ultimate reason we brought him along on vacation. We get to enjoy together. We can spend the best time with the people we love the most. We share the unforgettable memories. When we make a photo book of a trip, we are all in it.

So, I think that adds another guilt - I am selfish. Taking my son on vacation adds to my happiness. It is not exactly for him, but for me, for my wife and our family as a whole.

If you are a parent, you would have faced the same situation like mine when planning a vacation. Should you bring along your children?

The pros:

- spend the magic moment and have tonnes of fun together
- need not miss them or worry about them because you are separated
- more time for bonding and meaningful conversation
- exposing your children to different culture and ways of living that broaden their views and experiences.

The cons:

- spend a lot more money on vacation: extra beds, air tickets, meals, etc.
- the biggest worry: the potential risk of upbringing a child who spends extravagantly and irresponsibly, and turns into a long-term liability.

What do you normally do? How do you weigh the pros and cons?

However, I had made up my mind long ago. I would continue to bring my son along until the day he becomes an independent adult. Do I worry about the risk?

So, I am continuously educating him about managing finances prudently. It is fine to spend money on your "wants" or the things that fulfill you, as long as you have the means.

Here is my advice to him: "Son, it is alright to spend money. But remember that you have to become someone valuable first because money only flows to valuable things. Become a producer, who produces value to the world. Learn how to do that efficiently and effectively, and you'll never run out of money."

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