

## LAURA ON LIFE

## Sending the kids packing

I should have known better. Of course, I should have. I don't know what I was thinking.

I asked my kids to pack one bag for themselves with the things they'd need for our trip to Hawaii.

Yes, I was starting the process way before I had to, but I've never been a last-minute sort of person. I needed to know where the gaps in our preparedness were going to be before it was too late to do something about it. What if somebody didn't have a swimming suit that fit? I needed to know that now. Though, I'm not sure where I'd buy a swimming suit in February... but I'll cross that bridge when I come to it.

I learned very quickly that there is a huge difference between what I think is necessary for a trip to Hawaii and what my kids think is necessary.

I told them how long we were likely to be there and what the temperatures were likely to be. Was I wrong to think that if they packed their own bag, there would be a few less tasks that I had to do?

The answer is yes, I was wrong.

My fourteen-year old intended to travel light where clothes are concerned. He was bringing two pairs of swimsuits and three t-shirts. I



Laura Snyder

asked him if he intended to change his underwear between showers.

"We get to take showers?" he asked.

That wasn't the point I was trying to make, but can I help if he piles on the points before I get a chance to address them?

"Of course, there will be showers. Now, back to the underwear."

"What about them?"

"Where are they?"

"If I pack underwear, I won't have room for my telescope and my metal detector."

"We're not setting up a science lab in Hawaii! Besides, if you don't wear underwear, they'll make you dance at the luau!"

He looked sufficiently horrified.

There would be underwear in his bag.

My daughter was well-prepared clothes-wise. Girls tend to think ahead that way. She may have been better prepared than me, in fact. She found it necessary to pack a bag of Cheetos, some Lifesaver candies and Band-aids. Apparently, they don't have these things in Hawaii. Better safe than sorry. She also wanted to bring a huge fly swatter "to use on all those tarantulas."

"You've been talking to your brother about tarantulas, haven't you?"

"Yes, and did you know they can shoot missiles out their rear ends if you make them mad?"

With a sigh, I told her that the best way to handle a rogue tarantula was with Cheetos. One bite and they'd keel over - like anyone who ate those vile bits of cheesy-flavored salt balls should.

Feeling fully prepared for anything, including a tarantula invasion, my daughter zipped

up her bag.

My youngest child did not think clothing was an important component of a packed bag. In fact, when I checked on him to see how he was doing, I found everything except clothes in his bag.

I pulled out Fuz-zles, his stuffed dog, a Game Boy complete with games, one orange crayon (in case he wanted to color.). He did not pack anything to color on so... not sure what his plan was. I took the crayon out. If there is no paper, kids can get annoyingly creative with crayons and I didn't want any "creativity" happening at 30,000 feet in the air.

He packed a plastic shovel for the beach, which was logical, and a blanket, in case our lodgings did not have any (not logi-

cal). He brought a Ziploc baggie full of Legos because no one knows what might happen if there are no Legos with which he may play. This same baggie contained the uneaten half of a Little Debbie's Zebra Cake that he decided he might need in Hawaii. He apparently couldn't get it all the way to the bag without taking a bite first.

He brought his Cub Scout compass in case the plane got lost and a two-liter bottle for messages in case we were stranded. It was an island, after all. Again, nothing on which to write a message.

Most importantly, he told me, he was bringing a jar of

water. I thought he might think that Hawaii didn't have any drinking water. But no, he said he was bringing the water to put out the fire if a volcano should erupt while we're there.

Where to start explaining?

Never mind. I put the jar of water back in his bag.

He was prepared for almost every circumstance except the one where he might need to get dressed in Hawaii... but what are the chances of that happening?

*Laura Snyder is a nationally syndicated columnist, author & speaker. You can reach Laura at [lsnyder@lauraonlife.com](mailto:lsnyder@lauraonlife.com) Or visit her website [www.lauraonlife.com](http://www.lauraonlife.com) for more info.*

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