

LONG ROAD TRIPS CAN BOOST MENTAL CLARITY

BY TONISHA MELVIN

Long road trips can be a powerful tool for clearing your mind and managing stress. Driving allows you to detach from everyday worries and offers a unique combination of freedom, solitude, and physical movement, all of which can contribute to mental clarity. You can go on a solo journey or a trip with friends or family for meaningful conversations through a shared experience. The open road can be a place where the mind finds a sense of peace and connection.

One of the primary benefits of a long road trip is the freedom it offers. Driving gives you a sense of control and autonomy that can be hard to find in daily life. Unlike other types of travel, where you're bound by strict schedules and routines, a road trip allows you to go at your own pace — stopping when you want, changing direction, or taking a detour if you prefer to explore something new. Taking control of your environment and schedule can be incredibly liberating.

Along with freedom comes the opportunity for reflection and creativity. Long hours in the car provide time to disconnect from daily emails, text messages, phone calls, tasks, errands, social media, and meetings that can distract you from your needs.

Road trips nudge you to live in the moment, allowing you to process emotions and gain a fresh perspective on life. For many people, this can be cathartic, a kind of mental reset. Whether you're reflecting on a difficult situation, contemplating future goals, or just giving your mind the freedom to wander, the open road can be a perfect environment for self-reflection.

The physical aspect of road trips shouldn't be overlooked, either. Take breaks to stretch your legs and explore beyond the steering wheel. Connect with natural wonders such as mountains, beaches, forests, or open fields. Studies show that exposure to nature can have a soothing effect on

the brain and help to lower levels of cortisol, a stress hormone.

While long road trips aren't for everyone, they can provide an opportunity for mental relaxation and emotional healing. The combination of freedom, reflection, physical movement, and exposure to nature can help reset the mind, reduce stress, and foster a sense of clarity.



TONISHA MELVIN, DNP, CRRN, ANP-C, PMHNP-BC (Mercer University), is a nurse practitioner who is president and co-CEO of DMV Medical Group in Kensington, Maryland, where she currently

provides primary and mental health care. She was named among the African American Leaders in Health Care by *Becker's Hospital Review* in 2019, 2020, and 2022 and is a contributing author of *The Charge Nurse Leader Program Builder: A Competency-Based Approach for Developing Frontline Leaders*, a comprehensive curriculum and road map for developing nurse leaders and ensuring charge nurses are trained, mentored, and supported in their roles.

HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY? Upcoming issues will focus on themes of **journeys by train** and **plane**. If you have an idea for a submission, email editor@phikappaphi.org.