

How Road Trips Build Relationships

Lessons from the Long Drive Home

By Nicole Pfeiffer, Benefits Practice Leader



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This summer, my daughter Isabelle, a college student with a fierce sense of independence, spent her summer in Tucson, Arizona, taking on an internship and embracing a new city. When her stint drew to a close, it was my turn to join her home since her Dad made the trip down with the car. So, I flew down to Tucson and together we set off on a 25-hour journey to bring both her and her car back home.



That journey carved itself into my memory. Day one took us from the sunbaked landscapes of Tucson to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where the air felt different and the possibilities for conversation seemed endless as the miles rolled by. On day two, we pressed onward to Kansas City, journeying through New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and finally to Missouri. That long stretch of highway invited stories from Isabelle's summer: her challenges, her triumphs, love, friends, and her plans for the future. By day three, as we drove into Dubuque, the car felt like a sanctuary where topics both profound and trivial surfaced, discussed with an openness rarely found in everyday life.

What made the trip remarkable wasn't just the distance we covered, but the depth we reached together. There's something about the enforced proximity of a road trip — the quiet moments when the world is reduced to just two people, a car, and the ever-unfolding road — that fosters connection. Navigating unfamiliar towns, facing the fatigue of long hours, and sharing gas station meals strengthened our bond. The sum of those shared experiences was greater than any single conversation. By the end, our relationship had grown, not just by geography, but in understanding, trust, and empathy.

This journey holds an important lesson for our work. No matter how advanced our technology becomes or how efficient our virtual communications are, nothing replaces the impact of time spent in person. Just as my relationship with Isabelle deepened mile by mile, so too do our client relationships grow stronger when we invest time face-to-face. The strength of these connections is most visible not when things are easy, but when challenges arise: a new buyer steps in, a hard decision must be made, or an unforeseen error appears. That's when the foundation we've built truly matters.

I encourage each of you to consider: Are you truly spending time with your clients? Are you taking extra steps to see them in person, to understand their needs and build trust? The investment may be measured in miles or hours, but the return — in loyalty, understanding, and resilience — is immeasurable. Let's make the effort to be present, to travel those extra miles, and to build the kind of relationships that last far beyond the journey.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicole Pfeiffer".

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