

Helping You Navigate Your Journey Through Parenting

Summer Survival with the Kids



BY KIM DEMARCHI

Every spring I'm aware and excited that my list of summer dreams has begun to take on a life of their own. And every year summer brings a new set of dilemmas:

scheduling my work, kids' interests have changed, friends are out of town when we are in town, do my kids get jobs and how will that impact our dream summer, and conflicting ideas on where to go and what to do! And there is so much to do! There are so many amazing things to do and so much pressure to do them all!

But what about just laying around in our jammies until noon, hanging out, and playing a game with your kids? Whatever we end up doing, I do know all children and a lot of adults thrive when there are some routines and structure. Don't get me wrong - I have to admit I love the first week of not rushing around in the mornings, my kids sleeping half the day away, not remembering what day of the week it is, and maybe not showering until 3pm! But there comes a point where I crave a little more routine. Not a ton, but definitely some. Kids are no different.

Why are routines so important?

Routines give kids sense of security and help them develop self-discipline. They know what to expect if it's predictable/feels safe. Routines eliminate power struggles because you aren't bossing the child around - it's the routine. With less stress and anxiety, kids are more cooperative. Over time, kids learn to take charge of their own activities in their routines, which makes them feel independent. Kids typically have morning and bedtime routines because they are essential for helping things to run smoothly. Summer is no different. Routines also help kids learn the concept of "looking forward" to things and experiencing delayed gratification.

Balance: Experience vs. Down Time

Figure out how to have structure and lots of quality experiences, as well as needed "down" time. Try not to over schedule. Be prepared to say "NO" to some things to ensure there is some down time. Summer lives in my imagination throughout the year, I think mostly because of the thought of the luxury of time, not having to get to school, to sports, to the task of homework, etc... But with too much idle time, I don't want my child glued to an electronic screen. So, my mantra is BALANCE, finding that sweet spot of "just enough" activity, with some lazy summer afternoons.

How to Set it Up

Share your summer time goals with your children. They might be under the impression that it's going to be one non-stop party, you being the party planner. Or they might think they'll get to be on their screens all day and night. Have your children share their goals as well. Ask/email other parents what great ideas they have for summer. Use a white board, a big paper calendar, butcher paper roll, or a daily sheet for schedule. Be as specific or vague as you want. Plan and prepare so you can be more present with your family. Have a summer binder to put all your ideas and info, paperwork, camp flyers, brochures, etc. Make it simple so kids can follow it on their own. Make sure you schedule "nothing" too! It's great for being spontaneous and creative!

Know Yourself (and your kids)

- How much do you need planned and structured?
- How much do you need down time
- How much time do you need to build in for transitioning between activities?
- How messy are you willing to get?
- Is it best to get out and about in the morning and have nap time and home time in afternoon? or vice versa?
- What is your intention is planning and structuring and to have moments of connecting?

Flexibility

Be flexible! Having some sort of schedule or routine is helpful to make sure we are incorporating a variety of activities into our summer, but if no one wants to go on hike that afternoon, don't go! If someone invites you to do something else, by all means, do it!



Ideas: Busy and Bored

I used to get to the end of summer and think, "How did the time pass so quickly? We never got to go to that new museum or make homemade ice cream!" Gather your family and make a Summer Bucket List brainstorming all the things you want to do! You'll have a great list for planning! Make 2 lists:

• Summer Bucket List

At Home List:

Camp out in backyard
Water balloon toss
Plant a garden
Sunday Sundaes
Make Goop
Roast s'mores
Tye Dye t-shirts
Play with 5lb. bag of flour

Out and About List:

Drive-in movies
Camping trip
Go blueberry picking
Oregon Zoo
Trip to the beach
Children's Museum
Silver Falls hike
Delivery to Fire Dept.

• Summer Routine

List (all the things we need to be doing on a consistent basis - "must dos")

Reading (aloud, silently, on tape, with headphones)

Chores/Responsibilities if you have a napper, maybe the "must dos" can be done during this time)

Practicing the Piano

Volunteering/Community Service (the world is filled with ways we can help and simple acts really do make a big difference)(Dog parks, bake for community workers)

Brushing up on Academics (math facts, journaling, etc...)

It's okay to allow your kids to just sit with their boredom, uncomfortably. They'll come up with their own things to do. There is tremendous value in boredom. It forces them to get creative.

• I'm Bored Jar or Boredom

Buster Jar (all screen free!)

Decorate, brainstorm and write each activity on small slips of paper, fill the jar, pick when they say "I'm bored!"

Watercolor paint
Run through the sprinklers
Build a new Lego creation
Play a game
Build a fort
Use sidewalk chalk
Create masking tape roads for toy cars
Have a sock war

• Day of the Week Themes

(so many different options)

Monday is Laundry and Library Day

Tuesday is Field Trip Day

Wednesday is Friendsday (rhyming)

Thursday is Sports Day

Friday is Unplugged Play Day

OR activities can be planned based on the letter of the day:

Make-it Monday (building projects- forts, arts, crafts - and it doesn't have to be a Martha Stewart worthy activity!)

Take a Trip Tuesday (parks, bike rides, factory tours)

Wet Wednesday (swimming, splash pad, fountains, sprinklers)

Anything goes Thursday (allows for flexibility)

Friend Friday (play dates with friends, Family Movie Night)

No matter what, I would highly recommend strictly limiting technology/screens. Perhaps a certain time each day can be designated "screen time", or they can be allotted a certain number of minutes. Perhaps the whole family watches a family movie. I would also institute daily reading time and library visits. Check out your local libraries! There are summer reading programs with incentives, as well as performers, storytellers and magicians.



You can also brainstorm with your children:

• ABC's of Summer Fun List

Attend story time	Backwards day
Car washing	Dance party
Eat lunch at Daddy's work	Farm visit
Go visit a pet store	Head to the park
Ice cream truck	Jump pillow to pillow
Kite flying	Laser obstacle course in hall w/yarn
Make popsicles	Nature hike
Open gym	Pack a picnic
Quiet time reading	Ride bikes
Sprinklers	Train set
Ugly bug hunt	Vegi paint prints
Water balloons	X out things on scavenger hunt
Yarn art	Zoo

• Trade Planning with other Parents

(Craft Camp or Sensory Experience)

Pick several families with similar age kids. Pick several dates throughout the summer with times. Each parent is the "host", planning a craft, experience, snack, game, etc... My friends and I planned sensory experience themed summer activities. I remember hosting a colored cold cooked spaghetti experience, a cornstarch experience, and a chocolate pudding experience!

Whatever your summer plans, connect with your children and have fun!

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