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never underestimate the power of caring

Guiding Tips for Smooth Summer Sailing

“It takes as much energy to wish as it does to plan.”

Eleanor Roosevelt, former first lady of the United States

Winter is over; spring is in full-swing; and it's time to start looking ahead to summer. Why so soon? Because any parent with a school-aged child or teen knows that it's *never* too soon to start planning your child's out-of-school time! The school year provides a structure to family life, and if you don't plan ahead, that structure can quickly unravel during the summer.

So how will your kids spend their time? What special thing will you do as a family? Consider these tips for smooth summer sailing!

Tips for . . . **All parents**

- Talk as a family about your hopes and dreams for the summer. What kinds of activities do family members want to do that will match your budget?
- Be careful not to let other people's plans (weddings, reunions, get-togethers, and so on) dictate your summer plans. Some families block out certain times to ensure that they get some regular family time in.
- Get to know the area around you. Many organizations and communities offer summer activities and camps that may interest your family. Many major newspapers publish a summer planning guide in the spring.
- Find a balance between interesting activities for individual family members to do and family activities.
- Plan to have fun together as a family this summer.

Parents with children ages birth to 5

- Make summer plans for young children that allow them to keep their everyday routines, including naps, snacks, and bedtimes.
- As a family, it's often more strategic to take a week off and have a vacation at home—rather than go away. (Young children often don't do well with too many changes.) Instead, do a fun outing each day. Go to the zoo. Go to a children's museum. Go to a park. Go to the beach. Go to a nature center and look for bugs.
- Plan enjoyable ways to spend time as a family. Get a sand box. (Or spend time at a nearby beach playing in the sand.) Go for walks, looking for different colors. Go to a nearby playground and play together.

Parents with children ages 6 to 9

- Check out your school district's summer class offering. (Or a nearby school district as well.) Look for activities through community education and also your local parks and recreation. Many have summer offerings for an affordable price.
- With your child, make a list of all their favorite friends. Then create play dates throughout the summer so that your child can see his or her friends.
- Create a balance of activities through the summer so that your child gets physical activity, does something in the arts, has time with friends, spends time with your family, and also has some alone time to explore what he or she likes to do.

Parents with children ages 10 to 15

- Make your home welcoming to young teenagers. Have lots of snacks and juices on hand. Create hangout spaces that they enjoy. Some like playing video games. Others like watching YouTube videos. Some enjoy just hang out and talking.
- At this age, kids can often resist family times. Instead of having them withdraw, encourage them to invite a friend to your family time.
- Find a way to mix your child's interests with your family's interests. For example, if your family likes to garden (and your child isn't interested at all), consider creative ways to get your child involved. Ask him to help out with a butterfly or flower garden or with growing strawberries (or another favorite fruit/vegetable).

Parents with children ages 16 to 18

- Be clear about your summer expectations for your older teenager. Do you expect them to work part of the time? Volunteer some? Help out at home? Complete summer homework? Talk through your expectations.
- Find a vacation that gets your teen excited.
- Remind your teen about weekday and weekend curfews. Too many teenagers assume that once school is out, they can come and go as they please at any hour of the day.
- Older teenagers often don't have time for family time, so figure out activities they don't want to miss out on. Many teens love to go out to eat, so figure out inexpensive ways to eat out as a family—or to get some ice cream occasionally.

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