



Creating a Meaningful, Fun-Filled Summer

Social Smarts

Ask most adults about their school experiences, and academics are usually not a memorable chapter of the “growing-up” years. Sure, a special teacher might be recalled but the hours spent learning are not. Instead, we recall socially awkward moments in class, challenges with friends, first crushes, insults, bullies and the infamous “cliques” to name a few.

Throughout the years, a majority of adults have believed that social dynamics will be learned “naturally” or in other words, that social instincts come with experience. Today, however, a number of educators and psychologists have been persuaded that what is termed “social and emotional knowledge” doesn’t have to be imparted solely through the chal-

lenge of life lived (Boston, 2009). Just as we teach reading and math skills to students, social dynamics can be learned as well through role playing and discussion.

Your child often keeps humiliating or hurtful events from you for various reasons. A desire for independence, to solve the problem on their own or the ability to “take care of myself” are typical answers when children are asked why they didn’t reach out for adult assistance. This summer, take the opportunity to prepare your child for next year’s social environment. Discuss key social issues, such as bullies and cliques. Read books and watch DVD’s that depict characters facing socially challenging dilemmas. Discuss problem-solving



*“Around 10% of American grade students now go through some form of social and emotional learning curriculum.”
(Boston, 2009)*

processes, empathy skills, and the importance of self-managing behaviors.

When children are equipped with social skills, they are more likely to face bullies or cliques with self-confidence. Popularity is put into focus and understanding friendship skills allows your child to develop healthy social relationships, while coping with the unhealthy ones.

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Special points of interest:

- ♦ *Traveling can be entertaining.*
- ♦ *Look locally!*
- ♦ *What can be read by looking inside your house?*
- ♦ *Think beyond books.*
- ♦ *The hidden value of your local library.*
- ♦ *Staying active this summer.*

Are We There Yet?

Are we there yet? If you have ever traveled in a car, you have most likely asked this question. If you have kids and are traveling this summer, you will most likely hear this question. Here are a few car traveling favorites from momsmini-van.com and ehow.com:

- **Count the cows!**
Count the cows you see outside your passenger window. Passing a cemetery takes away the points accumulated but only if someone else says, “Your cows are buried!” A white horse (or other designated animal) can be a bonus.

- **Name that tune!**
See how many song titles your child can name in 30 minutes. The person with the highest number of correctly named titles wins.

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Are We There Yet? (continued)

- **Make a check!** Prior to traveling, issue everyone a copy of the map of the United States. When a license plate is spotted from a different state, check it off the map. The person who spotted the state license first gets to check it off their map. The person with the most check marks wins.



Traveling can be fun!

- **Spy the ABC's!** Beginning with the letter A, shout out an item that begins with each letter of the alphabet. The challenge is to

stay in the order of the alphabet.

- **Spin a story!** One person begins a story. Each individual in the car adds on another part of the story. Be creative and have fun!

- **Just add!** Pick something to count as you travel. Billboards, trains, police cars, a certain color or model of vehicle, etc.

- **Keep on the look-out!** Prior to

traveling, create a list of things to look for while on the road (route, speed and highway signs, names, museums, land marks, grocery stores, gas stations, water towers, football stadiums, etc.). The person who gets everything on the list first, wins.

- **My new car!** Ask each person to name a number between one and ten. When everyone has given a number, start counting the cars that pass. The car with your number is yours. You may end up with a truck, van, travel traveler, motorcycle, or a "fixer upper!"

Finding the Time, Saving Money

Are you staying home this summer? No problem. Your family can still find ways to have fun. Local areas are a great place to start – visit your Chamber of Commerce and discover what suggestions they have if staying in the area. Local museums, parks and historical sites often lead to new discoveries. The local library may have books that are specific to your town or state. Challenge your child to learn more about an individual or landmark this summer.

"What better way to experience new places than to choose a selection of folktales from around the world?" (RIF, 2009)

Experience "another region of our country with the help of a good book" (RIF, 2009). Read a nature

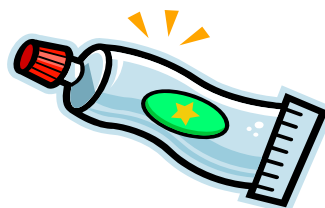
book while under a shade tree or read about a character on an adventurous trip and pretend to be along for the journey. Have you ever noticed the stars on a clear, dark night? Read about various constellations and see which ones you can find at night by pitching a tent in the backyard or lying on a blanket.

Reading Around the House!

While many look forward to the summer break, it is also a challenging time for parents as well. After several weeks, children become bored and want "something to do." Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) believes "there is no better time than this summer to begin helping our children bridge the gap in learning between the end of the school year and the beginning of the next

one" (RIF, 2009).

When school is out, ask everyone in your home to write down everything they can find that can be "read." The contest may last thirty minutes or a day. By recognizing newspapers, magazines, food labels, toiletry la-



"See how much reading material can be found around the house without opening a book." (RIF, 2009)

bels, mail, caller id, and other forms of reading, your child will recognize that "words to read are everywhere - you just have to look" (RIF, 2009).

Leap onto Learning

Educators often define summer as a time when kiddos “slide” because so much is lost while students take a “break” from learning (RIF, 2009). Here are some fun and innovative summer strategies:

- If you are visiting the zoo, a museum or traveling to a new destination this summer, ask your child to learn everything they can prior to leaving. When



“Taking a break from books doesn’t have to mean taking a break from reading.”
(RIF, 2009)

children approach something with knowledge or questions, learning will be more deeply embedded and the experience more memorable.

- Learn everything you can about the town or city you live in. You might be surprised to discover a landmark or two.
- The school year is often filled with book requests. Your child needs to enjoy the summer by

reading what interests him. Have fun with reading at breakfast or before going to sleep at night.

- If your child receives an allowance, plan to save for something she has been asking for. Calculate how much money can be made, create a strategic plan, and set realistic financial goals.
- Collect wild flowers or leaves. Locate the name of the flowers or leaves by using books or the internet (make sure to write down the scientific names as well).

Borrowing Books

The most cost-effective method for reading at home during the summer is your local library. If your child does not have a library card, now is a great time to sign up. Feel free to ask your librarian about books other children have enjoyed or popular authors. Here are some other things to keep in mind:

- Most libraries have summer reading programs. Contests and reading goals are a cost efficient and entertaining way to continue

reading throughout the summer.

- Look for specific sections in the library. Your local librarian may have a recognized author of the month, a section of award winning titles or a section with popular book series.
- Before you go to the library, have in mind what you would like to read (biographies, mysteries, animals, adventures, sports, or a book series).

“Parents: Don’t let your kids’ brains take a vacation.”
(JHU, 2009)

- Books of poetry allow a child to read short works by an author. Poetry typically contains rich language and utilizes word play in a fashion kiddos enjoy.

The Dog Days of Summer

Let’s face it. Summer time can be a lazy time. Children drop their daily school schedule, sleep late, watch television and often do less outside than they did during the school year. An Ohio State University study found that “children gain as much weight during the summer as they do during the entire school year” (JHU, 2009). How do we keep our kiddos in shape?

- Set limits on computer and television time. Encourage your child to ride their bike, shoot basketball hoops, play in the sprinkler, swim, or walk the family dog.
- Need extra spending money? Offer to weed



“Physical activity and exercise contribute to healthy development.”
(JHU, 2009)

flower beds, wash cars, or take care of someone’s pets while they’re away for summer vacation.

- On weekends, look for local parks that may have hiking or bike trails.

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Promoting social & emotional fitness for kids.

Daphne Morris, M.Ed., met Trevor Romain in 1992 when he visited a school as a guest speaker. Impressed by Trevor's profound and meaningful impact on students, Daphne joined The Trevor Romain Company in 2006. A former elementary school principal, Daphne holds two Master's degrees in education.

May Q&A

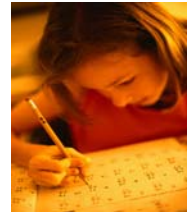
Q: *My child doesn't like math. How can I help strengthen math skills at home?*

Flashcards are a useful and effective way to practice math skills. However, using this one means of memorization alone can become monotonous and boring. Playing with a deck of cards requires a child to strategize and offers a lot of opportunity for the acquisition of math skills. Dominoes are a great way to make addition fun as well. Create timed tests and see how many problems your child can solve in a "mad minute." Challenges encourage memorization and build self-confidence.

In the kitchen, take advantage of naturally occurring lessons and learning opportunities such as measuring, following recipes, or doubling a recipe which all require mathematical skills.

When using a ruler, make predictions prior to measuring. By making visual estimates and checking for accuracy, your child will discover the difference between six inches and a foot through visualization alone.

Enlisting your child's assistance in adding grocery bills or other everyday calculations illustrates the importance of math.



Resources:

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