

Getting Over the Midsummer Slump

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Sarah here. All across the country, schools are scrambling to figure out how to safely reopen in the Fall. Unless your kids are going to be doing virtual school or homeschool this year, you likely have at least another month to go before classes resume...whether that's in the classroom or in your living room. In the meantime, you have a family who is increasingly antsy. Tempers may be flaring, patience may be running thin, and boredom may have set in. While I don't generally believe in being bored since there are so many things to do, even I get it. Everyone has been at home together for too long. Your kids have probably done a lot of the things they'd normally do for fun. If you have a pool at home, swimming may no longer feel like a novelty. Your little builders may have exhausted their Lego construction ideas. Your readers may have finished their favorite series...for the second time.

Mom, I'm bored!



Your family also likely doesn't have access to their typical summertime activities. Camps may have been cancelled or you may not have been comfortable sending your kids, given health concerns in your area. Zoos, theme parks, museums...a lot of typical summer venues may be closed or may not feel like good options. You've officially hit the midsummer slump. Now what?

Part of the problem is that you and your family are tired! You may have been a total SOA (Super Over-Achiever) during the school year and in the beginning of the summer- doing educational activities, DIY projects, science experiments, story time and outdoor expeditions. But...it's hard to sustain that level of motivation, effort and engagement- especially when you have your own stuff going on...like your job, taking care of your home and managing the stress of daily life.



So, if you and your family have hit the summertime slump, we're here to help you get through it. ☺ The following are some ideas for ways to keep sane and keep busy in the coming weeks.

- Create a pass-it-on-style story using dice, like Rory's Story Cubes. There are even character-based expansion packs (e.g., Batman, Scooby Doo), which can make storytelling easier for some kids by giving them a familiar context for their stories.
- Think through some truly ridiculous and silly scenarios playing Would You Rather...? If you have a hard time generating prompts, you can check out one of the numerous Would You Rather...? books or games that are available for purchase.
- Get your kids engaged in stories in a different way by introducing them to audiobooks. While reading physical books is important, it's also okay for your kids to consume stories in other ways too. Digital audiobooks are available for free through public libraries and via membership sites (e.g., Audible, Chirp). Just make sure that they have a comfortable set of headphones so you can enjoy quiet time while they enjoy their book. ☺
- Have your kids brush up their parts of speech by doing some Mad Libs! They even make Mad Libs Junior for younger kids (4-7-year-olds). If your kids are old enough to do them

on their own, then yes, they *will* likely use silly and inappropriate words to complete their stories. But at least they'll be having fun while getting back-to-school ready. Word to the wise- keep some of their completed Mad Libs...reading back through them will be a hilarious treat down the road!

- You may already have some podcasts that you enjoy or that you share with your kids. But, if not, there are a variety of fictional and non-fiction podcasts that you and your kids could discover. For a list of youth-friendly podcasts, check out:
<https://www.common Sense Media.org/blog/the-best-podcasts-for-kids>
- Focus on the little details by playing I Spy or Find the Differences. If you need resources, there are a number of apps, books and games. Seriously, I gave my daughter her first Find the Differences book this week and she *immediately* sat down and poured over the first set of pictures. She was so excited when she started finding the differences. 😊
- For older kids or kids who like a serious challenge, help them discover brain teasers, riddles, logic puzzles and codes. There are even apps and puzzle books with themes or overarching stories (e.g., right now, I'm doing a "cold case" puzzle book).
- If you want to have fun with your slightly older kids, check out the free printable Cards Against Humanity Family Edition (designed for ages 8 and up).
- Take a virtual trip to a museum, zoo or aquarium. Is it the same as being there in person? Nope. But there are museums, zoos and aquariums *all over the world* that have free virtual exhibits, tours and videos available. Everything from dinosaur bones to Impressionist paintings can be explored. And, live video feeds from zoos and aquariums mean that you are much more likely to actually see the animals up close and personal.
- If you have creative kids, let them make videos of themselves being silly, sharing their talents, interviewing family members or demonstrating new skills. Trust me. Kids are amazing and hilarious. Watching family movies are the best! If you have younger kids, you're in charge of what happens behind-the-scenes, so, you can share videos with family and friends if you'd like or post them to a private Youtube channel that only invitees can access.

- Seriously, video games *can* be okay and can be an escape that you all may enjoy. In our home, we finally got a Nintendo Switch! My daughter and I now get to enjoy playing Animal Crossing via online play with her best friend and her family, who live hours away. The girls get to have a playdate and practice reading, problem solving, and frustration tolerance, the adults get to catch up and it's all in the context of a delightfully adorable and benign videogame. Plus, you can set up and create users for younger kids. So, you'll still be in charge but you each have your own separate player. 😊



- Encourage your kids to think about others. Maybe they don't get to see their friends or extended family right now. Help them come up with ways to let other people know that they're thinking about them. They could make gifts, cards, pictures or stories. They could write letters to a pen pal. Seriously- everyone loves getting (non-junk) mail!

Finally, make sure you and everyone at home gets to enjoy some free time. Even young kids can do art, play or read fairly independently (at least for short amounts of time). It's important to encourage your kids to entertain themselves. Remember those hobbies I talked about a few weeks ago? Hopefully they have some and so do you, so enjoy them! Regardless of which ideas you try over the coming weeks, remember that you *will* get through the next month or so. And, even though we don't know exactly how things will be, school *will* reconvene in some form or fashion and, at some point, life will be more normal.