



How to Stay Connected With Your Kids When School's Out for the Summer

For better or for worse, school is often the tie that binds us to our children throughout the year. Whether we are connecting with teachers, helping with homework, or talking about the day, school is a common interest that fuels our discussions, interactions, and connectivity between parents and children. Without school as a common bond and without teachers to help us gain insights from afar, it can be a challenge to remain in touch over the summer, especially if your child is resisting. When it comes to summer we often think about how to keep our children busy, or how to keep education going, but summer is also a great opportunity for family relationship growth.

Here are some tips for staying connected this summer:

Take the Pressure Off

Yes, school was something that bonded you - but perhaps it was not in a positive way. If school was a source of relationship conflicts for you and your child, summer is your chance to bond in difference ways. What do you both love about summer? Sun bathe together, bike, swim, play in the yard, cook together (outdoor meals are very kid-friendly!)

Relinquish Control

Many times, you had to take a leading role in decisions about school. Depending upon your child's age, this could have included what to wear, when homework is to be done, whether or not he/she would work, or what/how many activities he or she could join.

During the summer, let your child have some control back.

Let him make choices within reason about how he can enjoy his time and loosen the reign about any decisions that won't affect his health, safety, or well-being.

Do Some Reading

Want a unique way to connect with your middle schooler or teen? Consider reading one of the books she's selected off her summer reading list too. You'll be able to discuss the book together, which will give you a reason to chat (and will give her a leg-up on comprehension too)!

Workout Together

All school year, exercise may be something that you had to squeeze in during the wee hours of the morning, after work, or while the kids were otherwise occupied. Summer presents an opportunity for you to make fitness a family

affair. Get the kids involved with your walks, play sports together, or swim. Get creative and get in shape together.

Make Some Magic

This summer, make something magical happen. Do the unexpected. Try something against all your instincts. Take the day off to take your children to the zoo. Serve ice cream for dinner with a straight face. Have a party for no reason. Make memories instead of to-do lists.

Slow Down A Little

Summer is a time to appreciate what is really important. Sure, nothing's really changed. You are still busy and stressed. But every now and then, take the time to catch up with your kids. Listen to them talk about a new interest at length over ice pops. As they say, you don't get these years back.

Accept Your Child for Whom He/She Is

No matter what is expected from your child in school, let your home be a haven where they can be themselves, no matter their temperament, personality, or interests. Take time to understand what is important to them. Attend a movie you wouldn't ordinarily, take him to a car show, or attend an event that you normally wouldn't. Most of all be kind even when the latest interest seems silly or unusual.

Do Dessert Together

For some families, dinner together at 6pm is just not possible - but that doesn't mean that you have to forgo the bonds of mealtime. Have dessert together instead. Tip: Have your treat at the table or outside together rather than by the TV so that you can interact with each other.