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## Parenting Teenagers: A Summertime Survival Guide

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Thank you for joining us for this discussion of making the most of the upcoming summer with your kids. We'll be covering a number of the points below during the presentation and we welcome your participation—feel free to share your own thoughts about the information presented and to ask any questions about the items listed below, or other related issues.

- There is no one-size-fits-all approach to making the most of the summer months with your teenagers. Tonight's discussion is offered less as a definitive guide than a forum for thinking-through some of the issues in this area of parenting.

### Some general tips and strategies include the following:

- Intentionally break the routine – do things differently. If you're not a believer in an occasional ice cream sundae for dinner, at least consider having a picnic outside, have dinner at the beach, or figure out some other way to make family dinner fun. Demonstrate your flexibility.
- Focus on connection more than communication with your teenager. This means sharing activities, hanging out together, enjoying each other's company without any agenda.
- Be the "fun" parent to be with – at least some of the time. Include their friends.
- Your teenagers may need help in finding good ways to spend their free time. Point them in a direction; try to keep them focused on positive activities.
- Stay vigilant. Know what your teens are doing.
- Some free time is essential. Teenagers need to recharge their batteries, too. A little bit of laziness won't hurt. But think of it like ice cream or chocolate – a little bit is wonderful, but too much isn't good.
- Little things count big. Even if you can't take a big family vacation this year, you can be thoughtful, respectful and kind - every day. This will go further in the long run than any vacation ever will.
- Involve the kids in planning family time. You may be very surprised to hear about the family activities they value and love.
- Be sure to allow them time to hang out with their friends, too. They won't want to spend all their time with family.
- Trust your instinct. If something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't.
- Take care of yourself – have fun and "downtime" that's just for you.

### Other more specific suggestions include:

- The importance of planning
  - Use a large calendar in an area such as the kitchen, where everyone can see it.
  - Keep track of the activities that are going on, whether it is a family vacation, summer camp or "do nothing" days. This way, when you or your children are making plans, you can refer to the calendar and know whether the plans will interfere with something else that is going on. The calendar also helps in allowing children to know what is coming up and to be prepared for it.
- If your children will be going to a summer camp, try to visit beforehand and go over the rules and expectations for the camp. Try to set up a time when they will be able to meet some of the staff and become familiar with the area.
- Before summer break begins, go over expectations with your children. What behavior do you expect?
  - What chores are to be completed? What will their days be like?

- What rules and expectations will be in place concerning use of the car, getting and keeping a job, curfew, how late the kids may sleep in the morning, etc?
- Write down expectations so there isn't any confusion later.
- Incorporate reading into the summer activities. If you are going on vacation, visit the library and read books on the places you will be going. If you will be staying around your area, visit the library and have your children get books on different places around the world and have them take "pretend" vacations to exotic areas every week.
- For older children, have them help in preparing summer plans. Have them map out routes to take on trips, or have them think of five things they would like to do, such as a family picnic or going to the beach. Although you may not be able to do them all, letting them choose a few of the activities will ensure that they are looking forward to something special.
- Check out the local attractions. Many areas may have historic sites or parks that are free. You can incorporate learning and fun into one day.
- Keep a list of activities you can do as a family. This way, on days your children seem especially rambunctious, you can refer to the list and be on your way to keeping everyone occupied and happy.
  - Find "adventurous" activities to satisfy the risk takers in your family. Some examples might be go-kart racing or wall climbing. Find activities that are interactive and allow the children to be a part of the action, rather than watching the action.
  - If you aren't able to get away, try camping in your backyard for one night. Get everything ready and once you are "camping" make the rule that no one can go into the house except for use of the bathroom. Or stay in a hotel close to home for one night, use the hotel pool and other amenities to make it a one night vacation.
  - Set aside one night each week for a family adventure. Take turns letting the children choose what you will do. One week you might end up at home watching movies or playing games, one night miniature golfing and one night you might find a spot to watch the stars.
  - Pack an old-fashioned picnic lunch and go to a local park. Don't forget to pack Frisbees, balls, bats and horseshoes.
  - Use your local library, many have summertime programs for children. Make visiting the library a weekly activity in the summer.
  - Pull out the old photo albums and make a family project of organizing them. Using pictures to create collages can be a great project for kids and help them relive some wonderful memories.
  - Visit a local museum or aquarium. Or find local historic sites in your area and go to one each week. Many of the historic sites are free or low cost and your children will learn about the history of your area.
  - Volunteer as a family. Take time to volunteer to clean up a park, visit at a nursing home or look in your local yellow pages for agencies that could use your help. It is never too soon to have your children learn the satisfaction of giving to other.

#### References & Resources

- <http://add.about.com/od/parentingchildrenwithadd/a/summerbreak.htm>
- <http://www.teenagerstoday.com/resources/articles/summeractivities.htm>

***Have a safe, healthy and fun summer!***

*Dr. John Jochem is a clinical psychologist with many years experience working with adults, adolescents, couples and families. Should you have any questions about this presentation, or wish to learn more about the range of services available through Dr. Jochem's practice, Hawthorn Counseling Group, feel free to call Dr. Jochem at (847) 680-0755 or contact him via email at [jjochem@aol.com](mailto:jjochem@aol.com).*