**Cabin Fever? Staycation? We’ve got you Covered!**

How do you respond when your kid complains about being bored or having NOTHING to do? When the sun is shining, and it’s warm out, it’s easy to say, “Go outside and play.” But during the unpredictable months of winter and sprint, it’s tempting to spend money on rainy day entertainment or expensive vacations to beat the winter blues. Here’s a word to wise (and budget-minded parents): keep a few of the following creative activity ideas in your back pocket. Pull them out on a rainy day, during your upcoming spring break “staycation,” or when cabin fever starts to set in. Your kids (and your wallet) will both benefit from the quality time spent together and the money saved in the long run.

**TIPS FOR ALL PARENTS**

**Keep an eye out for deals and events.** Check out what’s going on through community calendars in your area. Remember to take advantage of deals offered through Groupon, Eversave, Living Social, or other coupons specific to where you life—specials can offer 1-day painting classes for ½ off or good deals on restaurants and area attractions.

**Be prepared for bad weather.** Good weather isn’t always a luxury we can enjoy—bright and sunny here, rainy and muddy there. Keep in mind some back-up plans for those non-sunshine days. Libraries, museums, indoor swimming pools, art exhibits, aquariums, or the second-run movie theaters are all viable, affordable indoor options. Be on the lookout for free, student, or reduced rate promotions.

**Take advantage of the good weather.** Did spring come early this year? Pull in some of that fresh air and sunlight. Check out festivals, parks, zoos, or backyard games. Fly kites, ride bikes, or go hiking. Be a tourist in your own town.

**Make it count.** They grow up so quickly. One moment they’re in diapers; another moment you’re standing at their graduation! If possible, take a few vacation days to spend with your kids. Explore new things. Do favorite things. Invite friends over. Visit family. Be together and make moments to remember. Make it fun; make the time count.

**TIPS FOR PARENTS WITH CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF FIVE**

**Think about things that move.** Riding the trolley (tram, or train), watching airplanes take off, riding up and down in a glass elevator—simple activities can create hours of fun.

**Explore nature.** Take a nature walk around a pond, lake, or creek and look for tadpoles, feed the ducks, or splash in the water. Be a flower spotter (look for flowering trees or buds).

**Check out the library.** Many libraries have children’s shows, puppetry, musicals, other special events or storytelling and craft hours. Expand beyond the event to play or read books in the children’s section.

**TIPS FOR PARENTS WITH CHILDREN AGES SIX TO NINE**

**Connect with animals.** Go on a walk in the park to bird-watch. Pretend you’re a National Geographic photographer, and try to capture those winning shots with cameras, or simply draw them in a made-up journal with colored pencils. Borrow a bird-call book from your local public library and learn how to identify birds by their sounds. Go to the zoo for more animal fun.

**Star gaze.** Take a night walk and study the stars. Look for patterns. Find a telescope in your city to let you see further.

**Build and construct.** Look into *Build and Grow*free kids’ clinics at Lowes hardware stores. These workshops offer a variety of fun things for kids to build with their own hands.

**TIPS FOR PARENTS WITH CHILDREN AGES TEN TO FIFTEEN**

**Host a slam night.** HAVE FRIENDS OR NEIGHBORS OVER FOR Slam night: Music Slam, Art Slam, Talent Slam, Poetry Slam (or create your own). With Slams, the rules are simple: everyone must participate, and you must have food. With a Music Slam, everyone has to sing or play a song, alone or with others. With a Reading Slam, each person picks a favorite story, poetry, or book to read from aloud. Whatever Slam you choose, match one to the interests of your family.

**Go “Camping.”** Throw up the tent outdoors in the backyard, or inside if the weather is bad. Build a fire, and roast marshmallows, add in a picnic.

**Have tea.** Join an old English tradition and host a “tea time” with various flavored teas, cookies, and milk at 3:00 p.m. Add in fabulous conversation about books, movies, or interesting people.

**Get crafty.** Go to Hobby Lobby or a local craft store and find a craft kit to do. Craft stores carry interesting kids that range from learning to sew to creating your own light sabers and kaleidoscopes.

**TIPS FOR PARENTS WITH CHILDREN AGES SIXTEEN TO EIGHTEEN**

**Be the “kool-aid house.”** Have your kids invite close friends or cousins over for a movie night and a sleepover, an ice cream extravaganza (or a chocolate-extravaganza), a field day in your own backyard or a game of capture the flag.

**Be a tourist in your own town.** Explore your own town—walk downtown to see new sights, go places you’ve never visited before, or set a green goal and walk in different greenway sections or parks every day.

**Do an over-nighter.** Stay one night at a hotel or camping spot and take advantage of putt-putt golf, trails, the pool, or dining in a new restaurant.

**Stay in.** Declare a PJ day and hang around the house catching up on rest from all the going and simply enjoying time at home with the family, sleep, a good book, movie, or playing card and board games.

**Bonus! Try at home idea.** Give everyone a turn at controlling the CD player, computer, or iPad. Each person takes a turn as the DJ and plays a portion of a favorite song, and the others have to guess the song and/orgroup/artist, and why he or she likes that particular song. This is a great way to talk about and enjoy music and learn what each person is listening to!

**SOURCES**

<http://www.parentfurther.com/resources/enewsletter>

<http://www.parentfurther.com/resources/enewsletter/boredom-busters-on-a-budget>?

<http://www.lets-explore.net/blog/>

<http://www.pinterest.com>