

Brownies for Breakfast

by Sue Blaney

Summer provides you and your teenager a chance to live in a different rhythm, to break away from old patterns and to try new things. Consider the opportunities you and your teenager have in front of you this summer, and plan to make the most of them!

Three reasonable goals for your teens might include:

- To unwind, rest and recharge their batteries,
- To develop new skills and relationships,
- To spend quality family time together.

The “lazy” factor: First, it’s okay to give teenagers some time to be a bit lazy. While they probably shouldn’t over do it, it’s good for them to catch up on sleep and to enjoy some quiet time; this can be healthy and rejuvenating after a busy school year.

New skills and relationships: Summertime also brings wonderful opportunities to get a job and/or to develop new skills. Teenagers have a need to feel important and powerful, and when these needs are channeled productively, kids develop maturity and responsibility. If the slow job market or your teen’s young age is making money-generating employment unlikely, there are still many creative ways your teen can make summer productive. Perhaps your son or daughter can run a craft club in the neighborhood, teach kids a new dance each week, or teach younger players soccer skills or chess strategies. When teens mentor younger kids they develop leadership and responsibility while helping the young ones. Other opportunities may arise to help out at a local community center serving lunch to seniors, reshelving books at the library or assisting at a community recreation program. Brainstorm with your teen and think creatively about how to find new opportunities that interest him or her and expand his or her network and skills. Teens often thrive when they have to stretch to fulfill obligations. Be sure they are appropriately supervised and that you are helping them to be successful.

What matters most: At the end of one summer that had included a family vacation and several weekends away, one mom asked her two boys for their favorite memory from the summer. The boys agreed their favorite time was the morning they had all hung out together on the front porch eating brownies for breakfast! Family vacations and weekend trips are wonderful but don’t underestimate the value in little, spontaneous events. How can you break the routine? Eat dinner out on the porch, have a dinner picnic at the park, take a hike together. It can be helpful for parents to appreciate *moments* together with quality connections rather than to always aim for the big events. Parents who have already raised their teens tell us that it’s the *time* families spend together that matters most.

Enjoy your time with your teen this summer!