



Things to Think About!



By Brandan Atkin

Check out these wonderful sites for your children:

www.brainpop.com
www.suessville.com
<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/>
<http://familyfun.go.com/>

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Battling Winter Time Boredom

By Linda Jorgensen

Winter time at our house is a challenging season. Between bouts of bad weather and the need to avoid crowded indoor places, especially when colds and flu are common, it isn't unusual for Cabin Fever to set in early on. Over the years we have developed several strategies that help us get through the winter while staying healthy and most importantly, mentally sane.

Keeping busy and following a routine are important steps to staying healthy and well as a family.

The Kids

1. **Routines.** The first thing we do every Fall is establish a daily routine. Rise at the same time, eat meals at the same time and going to bed at the same time are important especially after Daylight Savings Time begins. Shorter days make it very hard to stay on unless we watch the clock.
2. **Homework.** Children staying home from school over the winter months will need to keep up with school work. Smaller children can work with letters, numbers, colors, shapes. Older children can use the time for daily studies or review, if out of school.
3. **Get regular daily exercise.** Afternoon play time! During periods of bad weather roll out a floor mat and everyone hit the floor. Children used to spending whole days seated in a wheelchair can benefit from being out of their chairs. Encourage as much movement as possible. Stretching is good! Put on some music and dance. Pull out car mats and toy cars. Hold wiggle races, combat drag after balls, practice rolling, play floor games, etc. ANYTHING that gets your child moving is a good thing. At our house my daughter spends a minimum of 15 minutes in her reverse walker before spending some time stretching on the floor.
4. **Stimulate your brain. Use your imagination.** I watch for sales on arts and craft supplies and stock up whenever I can. I keep a supply bucket handy for projects when the mood strikes. Make time every afternoon for creative play. Work with clay, paint, make puppets then use them to tell stories. Make tents out of blankets, forts (or cars or airplanes or fire trucks or...) out of boxes, play dress up

and put on a play. Color pictures and cards to send in the mail to friends and family. Encourage imagination and creativity.

5. **Play Games.** Simple matching games, balloon volleyball, bowling with empty bottles or milk jugs, simple board games and paper-ball trash basketball are family favorites.
6. **Go outside!** If the sun is shining bundle up and head outside for even a few minutes. Being in the sun will cheer up even the grumpiest of youngsters. Go for a short walk if you can. Want to play in the snow but it's too cold? Take it inside! Fill several buckets full of the white stuff and dump it in the bathtub or a big dish pan. Build a snow man using household items then time how long it takes to melt.
7. **Cook.** The internet is an almost endless resource of recipes. Do a search then choose a recipe and experiment. Bake cookies, make edible play dough or have the children help you cook dinner.
8. **Quiet Time.** Younger children generally nap mid-afternoon. Older children may enjoy some quiet time snuggling under a blanket and watching a movie or reading a book. Or they could take a short snooze, too.
9. **Get out of the house.** Every so often we enjoy just getting out of the house. On days when the roads are clear we'll get a book on CD or grab our favorite music, pop some popcorn and go for a drive through our neighborhood. We'll play road games or I Spy while we drive. A visit to the grandparents or other family members (as long as everyone is feeling well and healthy) is always welcomed. Vary your route so you're seeing something new. Color pictures about what you saw and who you visited when you return to the home.
10. **Break your routine.** Switch everything up. Have a sandwich for breakfast, breakfast for dinner. Spend the day in pajamas and skip the chores for a day. A day off now and then won't hurt anyone.

The Parents

1. **Routines.** Set a routine for yourself. Make sure you have time for you. Dovetail your routine in with your children's when you can. Get enough sleep, remember to eat and make time for personal care. No offense, but parents need shower time, too.
2. **Daily Exercise.** Use a treadmill, put in a yoga DVD or go for a walk. Anything to get you moving. **Tip:** Children seem to love Yoga and the challenge of striking a pose. This could be an excellent family activity.
3. **Grown-Up conversation.** Be sure to take a few minutes daily talking to someone other than your child or children. No, you CANNOT count your insurance company's Customer Service Rep or the Doctor's Office as "grown up" conversation. Call a friend or a neighbor.
4. **Stimulate your brain. Learn a new skill.** Some years ago I taught myself to knit. It is a fun activity that I can do while my children were doing their activities. In time my daughter wanted to learn how as well. This year, I am working on hand embroidery.
5. **Get out of the house!** Sign up for an evening adult education class, join a book club, or spend an evening with friends. Consistent grown up time is important.
6. **Take time for your spouse.** Find a sitter, or in our case a skilled respite provider, and take a few hours for you and your spouse. My husband and I may not always be able to leave home but we still manage have regular "date nights". We'll put our daughter to bed and the rest of the evening is ours. Dinner by candle light, a movie, you name it. Take some time to re-connect after a hectic week. It will do you both good.

Spending time indoors during the winter doesn't have to be boring. By planning ahead the time spent at home, no matter how long, can be productive and fun for every family member.