

Preparing Your Family For Summer

TIPS AND CONVERSATIONS

SUMMER VACATION is great fun – and it’s also a time of unique challenges. Abundant free time, different activities, new social situations. If managed well, these are factors that can lead to a satisfying, enriching summer experience. With poor management, however, these can cause stress, grief, and unfortunate consequences.

Like most things in life, if we prepare ahead of time we can make the most of the experience, and avoid potential pitfalls. The following “tips” address common family situations, but the list is by no means comprehensive. Every parent needs to fully assess their family’s situation and environment, and prepare accordingly.

CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

Be sure that both parents are on the same page regarding summer plans and household rules. At the beginning of vacation speak with your child about the rules that will be in effect. Let them know what places and activities are acceptable or unacceptable. Be clear and explicit as to your expectations of him/her. Create a system that they will notify you as to where they plan to be and when they will return. Establish an age-appropriate curfew.

ROOM TO RELAX

Kids should be given the time and space to relax over the summer. Appreciate that they may need to recharge after a taxing school year. They may want to go to sleep later than usual and (within reason!) wake up later than usual. Create a home environment that is warm, fun and inviting. This will make your child comfortable being at home as well as bringing friends over to hang out.

STRUCTURE IS KEY

It’s important for their day to have some structure. Too much free time can easily give way to boredom and, if unchecked, unhealthy habits and behaviors. Help them devise productive activities. Encourage them to take summer jobs, volunteer, play sports, take up crafts or other hobbies. These not only occupy long summer days, but they teach skills, breed responsibility, and boost confidence.

TOGETHER TIME

If your schedule allows for it, try to spend extra time together with your kids. Trips and activities that involve the whole family, as well as one-on-one time with individual children, are important opportunities to strengthen your relationship. Don’t make the mistake of thinking that it has to be something elaborate; working on a puzzle or getting a Slurpee together can be a meaningful way to connect. Eliminating, or limiting phone use while spending time with children shows them that they are your priority.

LOOK AND LISTEN

Notice if your child seems to begin behaving differently, acting out or being secretive. Address these concerns in an open, non-judgmental conversation about what you are noticing. A sympathetic tone and sensitively chosen words will create the necessary atmosphere for them to share what he/she is feeling.

REGARDING SLEEP-AWAY CAMP

It's important to talk directly and openly to your kids about issues that they may face in sleep-away camp – especially if this is their first time. You, the parent, know your child the best, and are aware of what challenges the camp environment will present to him/her. The following are some "conversation starters" and accompanying points that you may want to include. Your intuition, along with your child's feedback, will guide these conversations and make them maximally effective.

Note: It is highly recommended that you familiarize yourself with key camp policies so you will be able to discuss them with your child before the start of camp.

HOMESICKNESS

"It's normal for some to feel a little homesick at the beginning of camp."

- It will usually get better with time.
- You can speak to counselors and close friends for support.
- (Identify with their experience) *"When I went to camp I was nervous/homesick/etc. at the beginning..."*

CHOOSING FRIENDS

"A great part of camp is meeting new friends! Keep in mind..."

- Your choice of friends will impact the type of summer you have – to the positive or negative.
- You don't need to have a "best friend" by the 3rd day. Choose wisely before jumping into close friendship.
- No matter what "everyone else" is doing, you are responsible for your own actions. Choices have consequences.

BOUNDARIES

"Living in close quarters with many other kids can be challenging."

- If you feel someone is invading your privacy or personal space, let them know that you are not ok with it.
- If someone is pressuring you to do something you don't want to do, you can stand firm and find other people to be around.
- If a conversation makes you uncomfortable, it's ok to say "I'd rather not talk about that" or change the topic.
- Bullying or teasing is never ok. Make sure you are not a participant or even a bystander to bullying.

SERIOUS BOUNDARY VIOLATIONS

"Hopefully these situations will never occur, but if they do, know how to react."

- If you see someone hurting others, or themselves, you need to get help from an adult
- No one – camper or adult – may touch you in a way or place that makes you uncomfortable. If it were to happen, you need to report it to your counselor or to another camp authority.
- When you report something to us (i.e. the parents), or to camp authorities, know that you will be believed and the needed steps will be taken to keep everyone safe

ABOUT MADRAIGOS MIDWEST

During the summer, and year-round, Madraigos Midwest is a vital resource to adolescents, young adults and their parents. We provide an array of prevention and intervention programs for boys and girls, including clinical services, the Lounge drop-in center, school-based prevention, Big Sibling programs, parent support groups, community education, and much more.

If you would like to learn more about our programs and services, or would like to speak with a member of our clinical staff, call the Madraigos Midwest office: 773-478-6000.

For urgent matters, call our 24hr support line: 773-478-6006.

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