

LEISURE

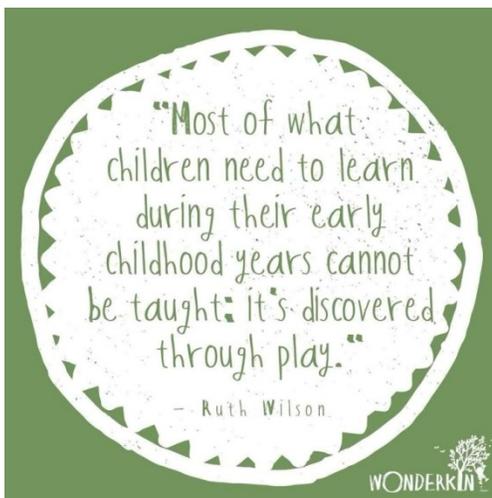


SUMMER VACATION!! Close your eyes and think of the first 5 thoughts that come to your mind- Mangoes and Ice cream! Swimming! Family trips! Making an imaginary fortress with pillows, joining a library to read books, endless games of Monopoly, visit to Nani house. **LEISURE!!** Summer is a joyous time for children- The time when you have nothing to do, and the full day to do it!

In the past, children's leisure activities were self-initiated and predominantly physical, imaginative, and unstructured. In current times, the entire scenario has changed. A child's day is packed with extracurricular activities, summer camps and occasional homework to ensure that they are safely kept busy and learning something while parents continue with their work. If there is any free time in between, children feel incapable of handling it and a common sentence you will hear throughout the day is "I am bored. What should I do?" We as adults too, may view leisure in contrast to work productivity, thus making it a struggle to enjoy any free time.

Leisure time is an important part of every child's life as it provides a break from academic pressures and offers opportunities for relaxation, creativity, and personal growth. While it is important for children to have freedom during their free time, **parental guidance** plays a key role in helping them use it in healthy, meaningful, and balanced ways. It is important to encourage a balance of activities- **To promote physical activity and channelize energy** through sports, outdoor play and exercise. **To promote creativity** through hobbies like drawing, painting, DIY craft, music and writing. **Introduce educational/ cognitive activities** in an engaging way through reading, puzzles, or science experiments. **Develop social skills through** playdates or group activities. Sustainable development Goal 3 is all about having healthy lives and promoting wellbeing by helping children stay active, healthy and manage stress.

Here are some **strategies** parents can use to guide their children in making the most of their free time:



🌱 Be a Role Model-Demonstrate how to use leisure time productively by engaging in your own hobbies, reading, or learning new skills that promote growth and wellbeing. Talk to children about why leisure is important.

👨👩👧👦 Promote Family Time-Spend quality time together as a family playing board games, doing chores together or outdoor activities. Often lessons are taught and learnt better in a relaxed unstructured environment with loved ones around.

📅 Set a Routine with enough time to unwind-Help children create a balanced schedule, without overscheduling them so that it includes time for unstructured play, relaxation, hobbies, and learning. Ensure that they get enough time for recharge in between activities.

🕒 **Limit Screen Time**-Today's children often engage in leisure through digital means- video games, social media and YouTube! It keeps them entertained in the comfort and safety of the house. But screen time does have its negative impact on children's health, attention span, and social skills. Some children find it difficult to detach themselves from the screen and go down to play. Friends also often meet online to play virtual games rather than play outdoors. So, it is important to set reasonable limits on screen time and let screen time be educational or interactive.

📚 **Provide Resources and Opportunities**-Offer access to books, art supplies, musical instruments, sports equipment or anything else that is of the child's liking as this will help them discover their interests. It is normal for young children to lose interest quickly. Be flexible and adjust their schedule or activities based on their evolving interests and needs.

👤 **Foster Independence and respect their choices**-Give children the freedom to choose how they spend their leisure time, within reasonable boundaries. Understand that their preferences may be different from your own. Encourage them to take responsibility for their choices and learn from them. Self-determination theory (SDT) suggests that intrinsic motivation and psychological well-being are enhanced when individuals feel competent, autonomous, and related to others. Leisure activities that support these three basic psychological needs are more likely to be enjoyed, leading to positive outcomes.

In today's fast-paced world, children's schedules are often packed with academic and extracurricular commitments making them exhausted by the end of the day. This affects the productivity and the interest of the child. Taking breaks is necessary for them to be more productive, creative and help them grow. **The perception of leisure has evolved.** In the past, leisure was synonymous with freedom—freedom to explore, imagine, and create without adult direction. Now the focus has shifted to channelize leisure into something productive. The key is to **strike a balance** between structure and freedom, allowing children to explore and grow while providing gentle guidance and support.

True leisure isn't just idleness, but a time for meaningful pursuits and reflection.

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