

PLAN

Work your way towards stress free school holidays



Planning ahead for school holidays can reduce stress and worry.

It feels like the kids have just gone back, and yet half term is looming on the horizon with the Christmas school holidays moving at a pace behind. In theory school breaks provide an opportunity to spend some special time with our babies but the reality is often somewhat different. When 3/4 of households have both parents in employment (either in a full or part time capacity), school holidays can actually become a point of stress and anxiety. In fact, a recent study has uncovered that more than half of us worry about the cost of school breaks and how to keep the kids occupied, while a quarter of us get anxious about childcare arrangements and worrying about getting our other 'tasks' done. We aren't in a position to change the system, but we can reduce those concerns through calm, thoughtful planning ahead.

Tackle the anxiety points now.

- Share the load. We tend to focus inward when planning school breaks, but as the stats above show, we're all in it together. Reach out NOW to parents you know and trust to start the dialogue of childcare swaps. They're fun for the kids, leave you confident they're in safe hands and will keep costs right down.
- Register your interest now. Often the better value, most fun holiday clubs get booked up fast! If there is a club that you are keen to get the kids into, email them now to register your interest and confirm the date that bookings open. Then, simply set yourself a booking reminder in Lifefyle.
- Book the must do's now. Doctors, dentists, haircuts, eye tests and any other check-ups should be booked now. You're more likely to get a time to suit your schedule and minimise the impact on your logistical arrangements!
- Prep for the 'boredom'. Be realistic about the time that you are going to need for tasks, calls and work during the break and have a selection of activities ready to go (such as painting, reading, films and games). Downtime for the kids is so important and they'll benefit from quieter, calmer activities.



Ditch the guilt.

The saddest of all the stats that came out in the research is that 1 in 5 of us worry that what we're doing to cover the school break isn't good enough for our children. Parent guilt in evidence! If you take the time to plan ahead now, you'll know that you've done everything you can to make the half term break and holidays as smooth and fun for the kids as possible.

UNPLUG

Ditch the tech to recharge your mind and soul.

An occasional digital detox will benefit your wellbeing.

It might seem strange for a tech company to be recommending time out from your devices but our ethos is based in the promotion of head space and in ways to reduce stress and anxiety. While we believe in using technology to support that aim, we also recognise the growing evidence that an occasional detox can help you to relax, reconnect, reduce stress and increase creativity. You don't have to permanently cut yourself off from the world, but research has shown that unplugging for even small periods of time can benefit your wellbeing, improve sleep and allow you freedom to refocus.

3 simple, effective ways to 'detox'

- Set your family a challenge to unplug one evening a week. Turn off the telly, put the phones to bed and shut down the computers and devices. Use the time that you'd normally spend on screens to talk, play games or eat a family meal.
- Try 'zoning' Social Media. Researchers found that people can feel more dissatisfied with their life after visiting Facebook and that it can actually trigger feelings of envy, misery and loneliness rather than connection. Rather than constantly dipping in and out, try setting yourself a time block each day for social. The rest of the time you can just focus on making the best of your own life.
- Keep your phone in your pocket or bag. Where is your phone right now? The likelihood is it's sitting on the table next to you. By simply having it 'out of sight' you'll be less likely to be distracted by the pinging what's apps and more likely to resist the temptation to flick into your social accounts. You'll find yourself able to focus on and enjoy the present - whether that's a conversation with the family, diving into a good book or simply enjoying a lighthearted box set.



Reclaim the time you're wasting online.

Without doubt, the first few times you try to implement one of the three steps above, you'll feel a little bit uneasy and maybe a little bit bored or frustrated too. That in itself talks to our addiction to our screens. Persist and you'll realise just how much more time you've got back, how much more productive you can be and just how much more you enjoy your own life!

PURGE

Clear out the kids clutter for positive growth



Streamline and simplify for positive growth.

If there's one life admin task that we hear about repeatedly from almost all parents, it's the need to clear out the out of control pile of toys that are creeping into all areas of the house. It's also a task that we'll find any number of excuses to avoid doing - claiming a lack of time to do it properly, not wanting to throw out the sentimental items or worry that the kids will be upset. The reality of course, is that if the kids haven't played with something for 3 months then they are unlikely to even notice it's gone! Plus, if there is too much choice or the toys aren't in full sets then it can actually detract from their playtime and positive growth. With Christmas around the corner, the influx is going to only worsen - so tackle those toys now and bring calm, stucture and simplification to playtime.

How to tackle the toys.

- You'll need a couple of clear hours, ideally without the kids there - either an evening when you're feeling productive or at the weekend when you can get some help to take the kids out.
- Get every single toy from every single room and put them all into a pile on the floor. Clean the toys storage areas.
- Split into 4 piles. Favourites; Useful or Creative; Sell; Donate.
- For the toys that you want to sell, ensure they are full sets, clean them, photograph them and put into small separate bags. Once you've finished your clear out, you can spend a session uploading all of the toy's you've photographed onto your selling site.
- For toys you want to donate, split them out into sets, clean them and then pack them all into one big bag. Put that in the car straight away to take to your designated recipient. Add a reminder in Lifeyle to drop them off!
- For toys to keep - ensure full sets, clean them and then group into similar items - e.g. building, imagination, games, educational, dress-up, soft toys etc. Place them in storage boxes or bins (don't overcrowd as that becomes difficult for the kids to manage) and then label them so that the kids understand.



A place for everything and every thing in it's place.

Once you've created the right storage for the toys, help the kids to learn how to look after them, by asking them to help you put them back at the end of each day. They'll learn to respect their belongings more and will also grow through having the responsibility of looking after them.