



## Protect Your Kids With a Proactive Parenting Plan for Summer

**The Downside of Downtime.** These days, summer seems different for kids—and parents. Because these are different times.

Young people today face more temptations and risks. Negative influences are the everyday norm of their television experience such that we hardly notice them anymore. Parents are oblivious of what their kids view on the internet. Social pressure and temptations are as close as the cell phone in their pocket, and drugs are readily available from kids they know at school.

During summer, more downtime offers more freedom and choices. And young people often make those choices based on what their friends are doing, how they can have fun, and what's easily available. That may be television, social media, and the internet. Or the cool new drugs their friends are trying.

**Countering the Downside of Downtime.** But what should parents do as summer approaches? Doing nothing is a choice, but normally not a good one. Instead, parents should be proactive, and they need to build a plan.

A proactive summer plan involves keeping kids occupied with positive activities a good bit of the time. Certainly, that can help limit the downside of downtime. But, ideally, parents can use the summer not only to keep their kids out of trouble, but to also prepare them for life, by striving to:

### 1. Maintain Balance in Your Kids' Lifestyle

- **Personally:** In at least one area, encourage them



to develop knowledge and experience that will lead them to competence and confidence.

- **Emotionally:** Help them develop a comfortable sense of self from being engaged in positive activities they like to do.
- **Spiritually:** Be their mentor and example and utilize whatever works for them such as family prayer, talks, age-appropriate books, a church youth group, or simply enjoying God in nature.

### 2. Remain Aware of What Your Kids Are Doing

- Set summer expectations and boundaries early and remain consistent, even when they whine.
- Be aware of what they are doing, which is harder if you're at work. If you feel any need to, consider using car GPS trackers, laptop software, checking in periodically, or whatever works.

### 3. Help Your Kids Stay Connected to Others

- Work with them to be intentional about initiating

and investing in good relationships.

- Plan events for them to be around friends and others who are a positive influence.

### 4. Teach Your Kids to Manage Their Time

- Set boundaries on their use of digital devices and television.
- Each day ensure a good bit of their time is scheduled with positive activities.

### 5. Encourage Your Kids to do Something with Purpose

- Help them get a job or assign them regular chores to earn money.
- Have them do something with meaning, like helping their grandparents or volunteering.

Our goal as parents is not relentless activity or meaningless busy-ness for our children. Instead, we want to help our kids stay engaged in positive activities that will prepare them for life. And, by so doing, limit the downside of downtime.

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