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Ask Dr. Harold - Summer Time

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you spend some time in travelers' land and you carve out time for you to relax. If you carve out time for yourself you might be better at helping them carve out time for their important activities.

Dynamics and Activities

I tend to begin summer with a trip to a bookstore where I finance my kids' picking out summer books. My daughter traditionally loaded up on books and my son would say, "Dad it is summer, you're not supposed to read in summer." To which I say, "not true," and here is why. If we let kids turn summer into a zone where they return to every bad habit they can think of we have lost the battle. When summer hits there are still bed times, chores, reading, writing, reflecting, and so many others. The areas that kids need to balance can be thought of in many ways but here are the psychological basic dynamics, thinking, emotion, physical, spiritual, and aesthetic. Make a list and encourage you child to do something from each of these areas each day. You can expand your list to social areas like their room, the house, the yard, and something nice for a family member. They will need to fit their preferred activities in and among these activities.

Road Trip

I am not sure about the psychology on this but people in a car for a long time tend to have good conversations. Even if the don't, they often think they do. The bay area may be one of the best areas on earth for a road trip with the kids. Have a family dinner with the expressed purpose of coming up with some road trips for this summer, sand between the toes, towers of granite, fresh oysters, cousins.....whatever it is, give your kids something to write about when they get back to school in August.

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I did a parent talk at a local school this week and parents were asking what they should do to have a psychologically healthy summer for their kids. So here are some things to think about when setting up the schedule for your family this summer.

Perspective

Remember how long summer seemed when you were a kid? Here is what is going on. If you are nine you are about to embark on a summer that comprises 2% of your life. My summer this year will account for 1/250th of my life. So when they say they just want to chill or hang for the summer you can say "no." I am sure that for kids learning how to properly chill and hang is an important skill set to have. Many of my teen clients with anxiety have "learning to chill" as a treatment goal. What is important for us as parents to teach is that even an important activity like hanging with your friends is not the only activity of the day or week or summer. No one gets to take the summer off. Responsibilities continue in the summer. The family still needs to run and they are part of the family.

Vacationers and Travelers

Many of us use time in the summer to go on vacation. The reality is that parents and kids have very different views of what vacation means. When you are a kid you are much more of an adventurer or traveler. Kids find and create new identities, they build things that can be seen from space, and they don't understand why you want to relax and read a book. For crying out loud there is a waterslide over there! They think you are crazy. Even if you tell them you need to do their favorite homework behavior of chilling and hanging. Make sure