

WORKING MOTHER

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ACTIVITIES - Winter Break Activities For Kids

Helpful tips to keep your kids from being bored during the cold days when school is out.

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They've already built a small army of snowmen on the front lawn, a city of igloos in the back and have played so many board games that now they are just plain bored. How do you keep your brood entertained over the winter break? We spoke to Sarah Laufer, the co-founder of Playoutdoors.com and asked her to come to our rescue with clever ideas that are fun for the kids, relaxing for moms—and may even create some lasting family memories.

1. Turn the family room into a fantasyland.

“During the winter it is harder to get outdoors to exercise and to keep kids active,” says Sarah. But with some imagination, you can transform an indoor space into a mystical forest or a pirate ship sailing through shark-filled waters. Simply move the furniture and give kids a designated clear and safe space to jump and run around in. (Moving the furniture will let them know that this space is not to be played in when the furniture is not moved). Create obstacle courses with cushions and pillows; draw pictures of what your fantasy space would have (think trees for a forest, fish for an ocean) and decorate the space to spark their imaginations and get them moving.

2. Plan a movie marathon.

Get cozy on the couch with some hot cocoa and bowl of popcorn and kick back for an afternoon of family movies watching. Let each family member pick their favorite flick and introduce it with a short story about why it's one of their favorites.

3. Get Crafty.

You probably have a pile of work to get through and household projects you've been putting off, but remember, this is supposed to be a break for you, too. “It's important that you give yourself the opportunity to enjoy the magical moments you can create with your children when they are home,” says Sarah. Take a few hours to start a new family tradition: “Get the children involved in making crafts that they can send to far away relatives or deliver to senior living facilities.” Be sure to keep a few. Seeing their handy

work displayed in the house will make them giggle with pride.

4. Make a treasure from trash.

Teach your children the gift of giving by having them clean out their closets of toys and clothes. Separate everything into three bins: Keep, throw out and donate. Discuss where the “donate” bin might be best used and deliver it to a charity together as a family. Also consider asking the kids to write letters to the people who will be receiving the their toys and clothes. Giving to others and sharing their thoughts about it is a great life lesson. And the bonus is you’ll have a house full of clutter-free closets.

5. Trade play dates to get free time.

Surely you are not the only one that is stressing out about having a full house of bored kids. Set up a play date schedule ahead of the break by reaching out to family, friends and neighbors. Take turns between families to take the children so that each mother has the opportunity to get a day to herself.

And one more universal vacation break reminder for all families from Gina Maranga, Director of Program Operations at Block Institute, a New York educational facility dedicated to serving the needs of children and adults with developmental disabilities. She reminds moms to keep a loose semblance of your normal daily routine (morning routine, mealtimes, naptime, bedtime, etc.). It will help ease the transition back to school at the end of the break.