



Ways to Keep Kids Busy over the Holidays

By Judy Arnall

Schedule Downtime

For people whose personality is one that craves structure, uncharted, relaxed empty space on the calendar can be very stressful whether they are kids or parents. They feel out of sorts without something they should do and may wander aimlessly, or become cranky (kids especially). It helps to have one activity scheduled on the calendar each day to satisfy the need for order for those people whether it is visiting friends, or bowling or cleaning out the basement.

Structured time is okay, as long as it is relaxed and not rushed! Time with family and new experiences are always fun.

What kids hate is anything that is hugely time-demanding or anything that resembles school type structure – something they need a well-deserved break from.

Playing video games is downtime to many teens and even adults. If parents want family time, they could join them in game playing. Get some games as presents that have 4 players and buy/borrow some extra controllers. (In my DVD, *Plugged-In Parenting*, available on Amazon, I've listed the academic and social benefits of computer and video games, so playing benefits the whole family.)

Connect with Each Other

- Have one on one time with one child. Go to a movie, restaurant, or coffee date with one and just enjoy that time together.
- Get to a job that is on your to-do list and invite a child to help. Promise a goody after! Kids open up when doing activities with a parent.
- Volunteer for an organization. Grab a group and go caroling at a hospice, serve dinner at a drop-in centre, or make beds at a homeless shelter.

Create Traditions:

- A weekly Board game night could be a Christmas holiday tradition that can include several board game nights over the holidays with different family friends. Our "family" (I say family so that no one child gets ownership of the games and veto rights) gets two new board games for Christmas and invite another family over to play. (Preferably with same

- age kids). Everyone brings snacks to contribute. My five kids have loved this tradition.
- Skate, ski, snowboard or toboggan day where the whole family goes and participates.

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