

Tips For Stress-Free Summer

The summer is a joyous time when loved ones come together. But for many families, the summer can also be a time of stress and frustration, sometimes unintentionally resulting in an increased risk to the child.

Prevent Child Abuse Texas offers the following tips to help families enjoy the summer while keeping tension to a minimum:

1. Establish a budget for summer spending. Be realistic about what you can afford to spend on entertainment, special foods, travel, etc.
2. Hold a family meeting to discuss summer plans. Ask for ideas from the children for family activities that would appeal to them.
3. Post a calendar of family activities in a place where all family members will see it.
4. Check community calendars and local lists of events to find inexpensive or free activities for children. Write all possibilities on individual slips of brightly colored paper and put them in a "summer fun jar." When children have been especially cooperative with other family members, allow them to choose a slip of paper from the jar. Then, the family can enjoy an afternoon of fun activity together.
5. Have your children make a list of elderly or shut-in neighbors in your area. Plan to share a meal, some of your time, or run errands for these neighbors. Explain to children that helping and sharing are important elements.
6. Find time to relax and reflect on the simple joys of the summer. When you feel yourself becoming overwhelmed, take a break to get a better perspective on what *needs* to be done and what *can* be done.
7. If you find that it is becoming difficult to avoid being verbally or physically harsh with your children, STOP. Don't take out your anger on your kids. Instead, try the following:
 - *Take a deep breath and count to 20.*
 - *Phone a friend.*
 - *Take a walk outside, or use another form of exercise.*
 - *Laugh. Even a comedy show on television will help relieve stress.*
 - *Spend one hour doing something you really enjoy.*