

While school holidays are a welcome break from the rush of school routines, there is never a break from parenting.

The following tips will help you have fun and connect with your kids so you make the most of the school holidays:

1. Plan

- Get your kids involved in making a list of activities that they would like to do
- Plan for good and bad weather
- Schedule downtime and time-out as well as time for one-on-one and family group activities

2. The best things in life are free

- Make sure the list includes plenty of free activities such as picnics, bike rides, trips to the beach, the local library and the great outdoors

3. Boredom is good

- Unstructured time and time away from electronic devices is good for young minds

4. Use opportunities to teach new skills and self-reliance

- Not having the pressure to rush out the door in the morning can allow for kids to develop new skills such as getting their own breakfast and lunch, taking the dog for a walk or going to the shops by themselves.

5. Ask for help

- Don't be afraid to ask for help to share the load. For example, asking friends or family to help care for children or to provide assistance in other ways.

6. Accept that things may not always go to plan

- Even the best made plans may need to be discarded at the last minute due to unforeseen events such as weather, illness or accidents. Whilst stressful, these unforeseen events often teach us and our kids valuable life lessons and may even become the source of family bonding or stories down the track.

7. Don't forget self-care

- Look after yourself and take time out to relax, even if it's half an hour whilst you have a cuppa and read a book. Remember, happy and relaxed parents make for happy children.

8. Support and company

- Having a support system can be crucial to any parent. It also gives parents the opportunity to interact with other parents whilst giving the kids a bit of play time.

9. Consider your child's mental health and wellbeing

- Whilst it may be a family tradition to go on an annual family holiday or attend a family dinner, maybe your teenager is too depressed or your child with ADHD will be labelled by judgemental relatives. Consider if it's really worth maintaining the tradition when it may be at the cost of mental health and wellbeing.

10. Holiday connections help us the rest of the year

- School holidays provide unique opportunities to connect with, listen to and get to know your kids. Use the time to spend one-on-one time with each family member

Support Service Options

- Kids Helpline is a 24-hour telephone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25 – kidshelpline.com.au 1800 55 1800
- Beyond Blue offers telephone or online support with a trained mental health professional ny time of the day or night – 1300 22 4636
- Lifeline is a 24-hour telephone counselling service – lifeline.org.au 13 11 14
- headspace centres provide support, information and advice to young people aged 12 to 25 – headspace.org.au
- eheadspace provides online counselling and telephone support to young people aged 12 to 25 – ehespace.org.au 1800 650 890
- Parentline 1300 301 300
- ReachOut.com for information about well-being.