



March 2012  
Metro Lutheran  
Positive Parenting  
Marilyn Sharpe

## PLANNING NOW FOR A MEMORABLE SUMMER

Plan now for a summer that you will cherish in all of the years ahead, because you savored each and every day. So how can you make that happen?

Most importantly, don't over-schedule yourself or your children. Protect blocks of time when nothing is on the calendar. This means that you will say "no" to things others tell you your child would enjoy, would benefit from, or should use to build a college resume!

Make space in your summer so that you can be spontaneous. When a delightful opportunity arises, have the ability to embrace it, instead of regretfully declining because you are just too busy.

Lie on your back in the grass and watch the clouds or stars. Name the shapes you see. Wonder about space or weather or how God can be here and there. Daydream and cherish your child's imagination.

Have a campfire. Make s'mores. Tell family stories. Invite friends to join you.

Go on a "God Walk," enjoying the beautiful creation, until your child stops and names one thing they see that they are so glad God created. Ask them why. Then, really listen.

Meet and interview someone who grew up in another country, a different faith community, another part of this country, or a different period of history, like the Great Depression or World War II. Ask them what they liked about it, what was challenging, what they will never forget, what they want you to know about that experience.

Play a game with your child, one in which she creates the rules and tells you what role you are to play. Play. Just play.

Learn something new - a song to sing together, a recipe for a food you've never eaten, twenty words in a language you don't speak, a folk dance, or how to recognize wild flowers or birds.

Spend lots of time outdoors and enjoy the sun and rain. Run in the sprinkler. Plant a flower or vegetable or herb and check on it every day. Watch it grow. Learn how to care for it. Ride bikes. Go on a hike. Play at the park. Pick up trash you didn't drop.

Explore your neighborhood, looking for the things you pass each day. Really look at things. Talk about the things you've never noticed before.

Go to the library and look for a book on a brand new topic. Read to your child. Have your child read to you or to a younger child.

Do service as a family. Visit a nursing home. Care for a frazzled neighbor's child for an evening. Collect food to donate to a food shelf.

Spend time with people you love, just hanging out and listening. Quality time always emerges from quantity time.

And capture your summer in a scrapbook, filled with photos, memorabilia, art work and journal entries inspired by your adventures. You have just slowed life down to the pace of relationship. You have given your child the best of all gifts - a childhood.

#### FAMILY ACTIVITIES

1. Ask each child, "What would your dream summer hold?" Build your summer schedule around the dreams of the children you love. Plan one thing for each child that is their "dream come true." Remember, it need not cost money. It might mean building a fort in your yard or going to a local beach or going on a picnic.
2. What is one thing YOU want to do or be or experience this summer? Plan for that, too. Tell your child why it matters to you.
3. Pretend you are a tourist in your own hometown. Visit one of the places you cherish. Go explore one of the places you've never been.
4. Plan a lemonade stand together, raising funds for a cause that captures the heart of your family. Go together to donate the money you've raised and talk to a person who works on that cause.
5. Write postcards about your summer adventures to people you love.