

INSIGHTS

by Michael Grose - Australia's leading parenting educator

Helping kids unwind

Nothing wrong with kids being busy as long as they have plenty of chances to relax and unwind.

Modern kids are busy kids. Regardless of age, their days are filled with activities.

Under fives do a range of adult-initiated learning activities designed to give them the best start to their learning lives.

School-aged kids have a huge range of leisure and after-school activities to choose from. It is not uncommon for kids to have four and five extra-curricular activities a week.

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Relaxation is a key to good mental health and well-being. It is an important life skill for kids to learn.

Balance busyness with boredom

One way to ensure busy kids unwind is to make sure kids get bored every so often.

There is a temptation to fill kids' days with activities so that no time is wasted.

"I'm bored!" is the last thing most parents want to hear their kids say. Many parents feel compelled to do something to alleviate a child's boredom.

There is nothing wrong with a little boredom now and then. Boredom can be good for kids' mental health and well-being, giving them the chance to muck around and take it easy for a time.

Here are 5 ideas to help you unwind your kids:

1. Let your kids regularly stare into the 'fire.'

Ever sat around a camp-fire and stared at the flames? If so, you will know how calming it is. No exertion! No need to think! No need to talk to anyone! Just a chance to chill-out and relax. The TV is the modern version of the camp-fire. Yep, TV used in this way is good for kids' mental health.

2. Let kids exercise without rules.

Kids are the kings and queens of play. Always have been. Until lately that is, when their lives have become highly organised and scheduled. Free, child-initiated play is the ultimate in relaxation. Fun games, games with few rules and games that kids control help them to unwind

3. Let kids experience flow.

Flow is a state we get into when we are so engrossed in an activity that time disappears. It is the ultimate unwind. We get flow when

we pursue our passions so encourage teens to find activities that they truly love and get lost in. Free play generally takes young children to flow very quickly so opportunities for unstructured play are essential.

4. Help kids calm down around bedtime.

Have a bedtime routine that calms kids down rather than winds them up. You can become part of this routine by reading books, telling nursery rhymes, providing soothing back rubs and other ways.

5. Unwind with your kids.

When I was young the best times I had with my dad were spent in the backyard playing cricket. Sounds like a cliché I know. It was fun because it was never a chore for him. He loved it as it was a chance for him to unwind after work. **Find ways you can unwind and rejuvenate with your kids.**

We want our kids to be busy and involved rather than inactive and apathetic. However, activity needs to be balanced with unscheduled time so that perspective as well as everyone's sanity is maintained.



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