



Let Your Kids Be Bored

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“Moooooom! I’m boooored!”

I’d been bracing myself for this time-honored refrain for months as my almost-4-year-old’s naptime slowly transitioned to “quiet” time.

I felt a deep stab of guilt. His toddler brother was sound asleep, and the nap block was sacrosanct for my work time. We had to solve this.

“That’s a long chunk of time for a preschooler,” my husband pointed out. “Maybe we need to keep the sitter through naptime.”

But we both knew instinctively that hiring someone to entertain our preschooler for the afternoon wouldn’t do him any favors. As introverted kids, we had both developed our imaginations during long unscheduled afternoons with books and characters of our own creation. We’d spent countless hours poking around in the backyard garden and climbing trees.

“Boredom” can be defined as “the frustrating experience of wanting, but being unable, to engage in satisfying activity.” And while that sounds—and can feel—unpleasant, numerous studies have shown that it is good for kids to be bored. **Boredom in kids can produce many positive benefits:**

1. They learn how to self-motivate and act independently.
2. They take responsibility for their own well-being.
3. They seek out creative challenges.

Kids who face unstructured time with no planned entertainment learn to figure it out. In fact, boredom can actually be a tool to help your child discover their God-given passions and how to develop them.

[Boredom can actually be a tool to help your child discover their God-given passions.](#)

In past generations, boredom was easy. It simply happened. Between screens, homework, and endless activities, though, boredom has become an endangered element. That means we must be intentional about creating unstructured time for our kids by setting healthy boundaries.

1. Choose one class or activity instead of three or four.

As a parent, you want to provide your child every opportunity to succeed. It’s tempting to enroll even preschoolers in a sport, music lessons, and classes to give them a head start in academics. While these are all positive things, a tight schedule can quickly escalate to stress, short tempers, and exhaustion. Creativity requires breathing room to flourish.

2. Create a screen-time strategy.

Create a screen-time strategy that prioritizes routine tasks and creative activities first. I know one family who allows unlimited screen time—after a child has completed a checklist that includes (among other things) doing a chore, reading a chapter of a book, and starting a creative project. Often, their kids engage somewhere in the middle of doing things on the list and never make it to screen time.

3. Schedule unscheduled time.

Provide art supplies or set challenges for your kids that require them to slow down and focus, like . .

Build a Lego tower as tall as you are.

Create a machine out of your toys.

Make an arrangement in this jar out of all the random things you can find in the yard.

Invent your own recipe.

Teach the dog a new trick.

In the past few months, our 4-year-old has developed a rhythm with his quiet time. Some days he does nap. Sometimes I do get hounded to know “how many more minutes?” But most afternoons, I go upstairs to discover our small engineer has woven a spider web around his entire room with rope. Or created a water park in the bathroom sink. Or plastered the upstairs with post-it note road signs.

And each day I’m encouraged that a little boredom may be just what he needs to thrive.