

FAP Parent Tips

January 2009

Keeping Little Ones Entertained in the Winter Months



For busy families who enjoy outdoor activities, cold weather can sometimes bring on the winter blues. Like many children, my sons and daughter enjoy staying outside as much as possible. They play backyard baseball, ride bikes and shoot hoops in the driveway. Spending time outdoors with friends and neighbors is high on their list of priorities, but cold temperatures and shorter days can drive them inside and me crazy! What's a frazzled mom to do to keep her kids busy and entertained during the cold winter months?

Parking my 6-year-old daughter in front of the television and sending my boys upstairs to play video games is a tempting solution when I am trying to get supper on the table or when I just want some peace and quiet. But as we all know, hours of TV and video games can lead to childhood obesity and usually isn't a very productive way for children to spend their free time. To get them off the sofa and out of the bean bag chairs, you really need to get them busy with organized activities. Sign

them up for indoor activities like basketball or karate and encourage them to try-out for school teams they are interested in. Dance lessons and gymnastics are a great way to "burn-off" extra energy and children will sleep better after a good work-out.

Maybe your bunch isn't into sports at all. Look for other fun and creative activities that will keep them and you busy during the cold winter months. Have them join a church choir, take art lessons, music lessons, or become part of a theatrical production. The important thing is to make a commitment and stick to it.

When you feel like spending your winter curled up on the sofa with a bowl of popcorn, remind yourself that YOU are setting the example that your children will follow. Everyone needs a little down time and watching TV or playing video games can be a great way to unwind, but remember that too much of a good thing can turn into a bad habit. Get up, get moving and beat those winter blues!

Extra Tips for Staying Busy in the Cold Winter Months

Tip 1: Head outdoors to run off this extra energy. If this tactic is less attractive during the winter months, in order to maintain your sanity and keep your kids busy this winter, you may need to get creative.

Tip 2: Getting the children out of the house is always helpful and there are a number of places you can go. Chuck E Cheese is a great place to entertain your

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kids for a few hours. If you want to go and not spend a bundle. Print coupons from online and skip the food. Go early to avoid the crowds. Some open as early as 9:00.

Tip 3: Another great option is places like The Jump Zone. Many have what they call Open Play hours. Some even offer free wifi. You can work while the kids burn off a ton of energy. The Jump Zone is a great option because it is affordable and there are not a lot of add-on costs.

Tip 4: Story-time at the library or local bookstore is fun for everyone. The children learn about new books and you get to relax. Check out your local bookstores and libraries web sites for times and dates.

Tip 5: Restaurant play places are also a great resource. Pack your anti-bacterial hand gel and load up! The kids love these places. Try going during the morning instead of at lunch. They are less crowded and you will wear them out before nap time. Also, breakfast tends to

be a little cheaper than lunch meals.

Tip 6: Arrange play dates with your neighbors and friends. Choose a day that works for you and your neighbor. Trade out houses each week. If your house is too small, offer to take the children somewhere. I actually don't mind extra kids at my house. They tend to leave me alone and entertain each other.

Tip 7: If you have a garage, park the cars outside and close the garage doors. Let the children ride their bikes, jump rope, or color with sidewalk chalk.

Tip 8: Local malls sometime have great play areas that are free. Again, go early and head home before lunch. Or, feed the kids in the food court and when you get home, nap time is right around the corner!

Tip 9: Keeping your children active in the winter is a little more complicated than in the summer but it can be done. Be creative and have fun with your kids.

The Deployed Family Support Group is an organization established to support those who are in need of a place to talk with others in the same situation. The support group will meet on the third Tuesday of each month for a brown-bag discussion in building 21, conference room B223 from 12-1 p.m. The forum for the meetings will be formalized as the meetings begin and the group determines what will be most helpful. Speakers from other established organizations will be invited to address topics relating to deployments such as those remaining at home, handling situations that may arise, and homecomings. The meetings are a forum for seeking advice from experienced members and learning about local organizations specific to individual needs. There is strength in togetherness so come join us and let's take this journey together. See you there!

The Family Advocacy Program (FAP) at DSCC is a DOD program dedicated to domestic violence prevention, spousal and child abuse prevention, education, prompt reporting, investigation, intervention and treatment. The program at DSCC provides a variety of services to DSCC, DFAS, tenant organizations, active duty and reserve military and their families to enhance their relationship and parenting skills and improve their quality of life. This mission is accomplished through a variety of groups, seminars, workshops, brief counseling and intervention services to include spousal and child abuse awareness, positive parenting, domestic violence, elder care, depression, grief/loss, couples communication skills, stress management, anger management, healthy communication, sexual assault awareness, and deployment assistance for military and civilians.

Because everyone faces problems and challenges in their lives, the FAP is dedicated to helping the DSCC community with those challenges. While these problems are usually resolved without assistance, they are sometimes too big or too complex to solve without help. Finding the right kind of help for complex situations is not an easy matter. Finding specialized, qualified counseling, how much it will cost, what to expect from counseling, and how to determine if the counselor is a good match for the client are typical concerns when seeking help.

If you are an active duty or retired service member or family member, the FAP Manager can help answer these questions, as well as provide free of charge consultation and referral service. If you are a civilian DOD employee, the program manager can answer your questions and refer you to the civilian Employee Assistance Program.

All services provided by the Family Advocacy Program on DSCC are free and confidential.