

Making good use of the school holidays

By Professor Matt Sanders



Although school holidays are a great time for teenagers to relax and have a break from the routine of school, they can also be a stressful time for parents searching for ways to keep them occupied. So here are my top five tips to make good use of the school holidays.

Tip 1

Sit down with your teenager before the holidays. Plan activities that they can look forward to. Encourage them to find out what their friends are planning to do, and make sure they have a list of phone numbers and addresses. Together, make a list of low cost activities, activities they can do at home, and activities with a budget. Check suburban papers and local councils for holiday activities or log onto the internet to see what's happening in your area. Keep the full list handy and refer to it when you're hit with the "I'm bored" syndrome!

Tip 2

Organise a holiday budget and discuss this with your teenager. It's important for them to understand that you don't have a bottomless pit of money. This may be a time when they could look for a part-time job, or perhaps you have a store of jobs to be done around the house that they might like to do to earn a few dollars.

Tip 3

Don't fall into the trap of being the "full time taxi-driver". Teenagers need to take responsibility and learn to plan how to get to events and activities they are interested in. Use regular family meetings to discuss and problem-solve how everyone can get to things they want without inconveniencing others. And remember, it's important to praise your teenager when they come up with positive suggestions.

Tip 4

Discuss and agree on ground rules for such things as getting up, and going to bed, but allow your teenager to be more relaxed than during school time. Also discuss how everyone can keep in contact with each other to manage meal times, transport and changes to plans. Agree on time limits for computer and TV use. Although it's OK for teenagers to watch a little more TV or use the computer more often during the holidays, it's important to monitor programs and computer games.

Tip 5

Try and arrange some family activities that you and your teenager both enjoy. Save these for holiday times so that they are more valued. Discuss this with your teenager

ahead of time if you can in case special arrangements need to be made. Parents often find that it's more difficult to find family activities that teenagers enjoy, so talk to other parents to see what ideas they have found successful. Remember, parenting is much easier if you get support from others.

Professor Matt Sanders is Director of the Parenting and Family Support Centre at the University of Queensland and founder of the Triple P Positive Parenting Program.

More Triple P information is available for parents of children of all ages living in Brighton and Hove. To find out about services in your area call the Family Information Service on 01273 293545. For more information about Triple P visit the web at www.triplep.net or call Jenny Collins/Karen Southern on 01273 294471

