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CREATIVE SURPRISES

I once wrote that children need predictable routines and creative surprises. This time of year everybody is tired of winter, school, chores--yes, everybody is tired of the same-old, same-old. With a little imagination you can come up with surprises to break up the routines and delight your kids.

For instance, have a picnic on the living room floor. Spread out a sheet or plastic tablecloth, use paper plates, serve picnic food. Bonus: no ants to worry about.

My children loved a Mystery Trip. Pick a destination reasonably close to home that the children either have never been to or love to go to. We used to go to the zoo in winter--the animals seemed different in the snow. Once we went to the Ford factory (we lived in Michigan) to see automobiles being built.

We sometimes played Game Pick. I wrote the names of all our board games on slips of paper. Whatever name was drawn was the game we played that night. You can do the same thing with books to read or music to listen to.

We invented our own games sometimes. One child would pick a word and the other had to write down all the words that rhymed with it. Each word counted as one and the child with the highest score won. Once I wrote a few nouns on slips of paper. The game was that each of us had to make up a story about whatever word we drew out of the hat. I had the last turn one night. Did you ever try to make up a story about a potato-masher?

Children not only have fun with your creative surprises

but they are watching how a parent uses imagination.
You are modeling a wonderful behavior to be imitated.