

NEWSLETTER

WebParentip, Volume 3, # 7 for 7-3-02

HANGING OUT TOGETHER

Here come the lazy, hazy days of summer. Many families will be off on vacation somewhere this summer. Most families have been thinking about what they will DO this summer.

How about giving some thought to what you won't do?

Summer is a great time to just HANG OUT TOGETHER. Things are more relaxed around the house. Parents generally have fewer fixed obligations like church committee meetings. Kids don't have any homework.

There is both an art and a science to hanging out together. By "science" I guess I mean my own definition: you are together, there are no distractions, you are in a quiet place, you are close enough to each other to talk quietly and see each other's faces. This all means you can be together each thinking his or her own thoughts. Or you can talk to each other. No agenda, no planned activity, you are just being together.

The art is finding creative ways to do it in your family.

How do you get started? One way is a simple 3-step process: 1) Turn off the TV. 2) Make a pitcher of lemonade. 3) Sit outdoors together.

Other hang-out scenarios might be take a walk together, lie down in the back yard at night and watch the stars, go fishing (strictly speaking fishing is a planned activity but there's lots of waiting-for-a-bite time).

Try some surprises. Set the alarm and wake everybody up before dawn to watch the sun come up. Do unusual things like an indoor picnic on the living room floor.

Don't over-program yourself or your kids. Leave the kids time on their own for daydreaming, reading, listening to music.

Give yourself some time for introspection. How am I doing? How are my loved ones doing? Take time to think about your physical, mental, and spiritual health.

Sometimes in a family the best thing you can do is just stand there, don't do something!