

NEWSLETTER

WebParentTip, Volume2, # 4 for 3-7-01

FIGHTING THE WINTER DOLDRUMS

We've all had those days. Everybody is sniffing with the latest winter cold. The kids can't go out--not only are they all sick but the wind chill factor is 20 below. The kids are cranky and bored. The parents are ready to explode. Spring seems very far away.

Here are a few suggestions to help you fight the winter doldrums--and win!

We tried all of them in my own household. Like everything else I provide in the way of advice, they all work. Unfortunately just not with every child, nor every time but give them a try.

I call these the A, B, C, D of Boredom-Busting.

A. ACTION

No matter how awful the weather is, kids need to MOVE. Put on some lively music and dance or march around the room. If you get into the music mood with your children they are more likely to respond.

We used to put on "shows." In those days we would each take several parts from "The Sound of Music" and sing or mouth-sync away. Try "Annie" or "Lion King" and encourage loud singing as well as much hamming things up.

The idea is don't just sit there, DO SOMETHING!

First, turn off the TV.

Then bake cookies. I always kept necessary ingredients on hand for emergencies like a winter snow-in but rolls of cookie dough work just fine. Dig out all the cookie cutters--never mind that Christmas is over--and have the kids cut away. Decorate "out-of-the-box" like orange and black Santas.

B. BOOKS

Just as I always had emergency presents for children the same age as mine in case we got a last-minute invitation to a birthday party, I always had emergency books hidden for those awful winter days. I made a big thing out of it. "Nowwww, it's time to see what books are hidden! Let's see where did I put them?" Hunting for the supposedly missing books was part of the fun. The children loved finding their new books. We read together when they were little; later each went off to read. Fringe benefit: no sibling squabbling for a while.

The alternative--or when your stash of books is used up: bundle everybody up and go to the library.

C. CHORES

Believe it or not, chores can perk up the kids and serve as an anecdote to boredom. You have to be creative here.

One trick is to "allow" your children to do a chore they never have done before.

Preschoolers love water play so let them wash the bathroom floor or help you give the dog a bath. Older children can use their budding organizational skills to straighten out a kitchen cabinet or closet. You can make a family project out of cleaning the basement or garage. Projects work best if you give each child responsibility for one part of the job.

D. DEPARTURE FROM THE ORDINARY

Try an indoor picnic on the living room floor; you can roast hot dogs and marshmallows at the fireplace. Eat breakfast food at supper time. Let the kids switch clothes. Ask them to tell YOU stories about when they were little or when aliens took them to outer space.

Have fun! And spring is just around the corner—