

## Summer holidays - restful or stressful

**Summer can be a terrific time for families. With less busy routines than we normally have, there are opportunities to build memories, strengthen bonds and interact more deeply with one another. But there is a downside too. The summer holidays can be exhausting for parents – perhaps even stressful.**

Our desire to make this a really special time for our children – to keep them happy, amused and interested - is frequently an ongoing challenge which can leave us feeling drained long before it's time to lay out the school uniform again. We can find ourselves "running on empty" and few of us will often have the chance to pull into the motorway services, replenish the tank, and take a well-earned, leisurely break.

It's possible we might be able to manage a pit-stop – the briefest of breaks for rest and recuperation. Or perhaps the most that will happen is just the equivalent of in-flight refuelling - we snatch a few moments of downtime while continuing on.

And yet it is so important that we are relaxed and reinvigorated ... and not just for ourselves. The greatest asset our children have is us - their mums and dads. They are dependent on us for the essentials of life, but also for the quality of that life. Our mood, our emotional energy and our general outlook, can all have a direct and lasting effect on them. Our ability to obviously enjoy our children's company, our eagerness to engage with them, even our readiness to smile – these are the things which brighten and enhance their young lives. They are also the things which are easily diminished when we feel tired, washed-out, tense or strained.

It isn't always easy to give ourselves a short break, especially if we have a large family or are bringing up children

on our own. But having a little time off is still one of the most important things we can do – for ourselves and for our children. It's really all about our wellbeing and the effect that has on those we love.

Let's assume we can't all leave the kids with the nanny and jet-off to some island paradise. What kind of activities are going to restore us? How can we make a short time (perhaps only a few hours) really count?

Whatever will refresh us is good. You'll probably have an idea of what works well for you, but here's some suggestions to start you off.

### 1. Go on a date with your partner

(a proper date, not ordering a take-away pizza and watching Match of the Day).



For any couple with busy lives – and especially for those with children – it can be all too easy for that feeling of togetherness to diminish. A date can be fun, uplifting, relaxing and renew your sense of belonging and purpose.

### 2. Have a meal out with close friends

Not every parent will have a partner, but most will have one or two close friends. A little time spent chatting and relaxing (while someone else cooks) can work wonders!

### 3. Go somewhere beautiful

Even those who live in cities are never too far from natural beauty. A stroll in the park or the woods, a ramble along the coast, or just quietly appreciating a sensational view can be very refreshing.

### 4. Visit the theatre, museum or cinema

Just breaking the usual routine is another great way to recharge the batteries.

### 5. Treat yourself to a pampering session

Looking good and feeling good are often connected. When you're tired or a little jaded, spoiling yourself can raise your spirits and revitalise you.

There are probably as many ways to rest and recuperate as there are parents who need to find them. It's not important how we refresh ourselves ...

... only that we do!

### Your Family Charity

Care for the Family has been supporting and encouraging families in the UK since 1988. Its family-building events have been attended by over 320,000 people and many more have been helped through special initiatives - including stepfamilies, bereaved parents and those parenting alone. Founded by best-selling author and speaker Rob Parsons, the charity is committed to strengthening family life and helping those who face family difficulties.

Care for the Family, Garth House  
Leon Avenue, Cardiff CF15 7RG  
Tel: (029) 2081 0800  
[www.careforthefamily.org.uk](http://www.careforthefamily.org.uk)

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