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Magazine

# 10

Things Every  
Child Should Do  
This Summer



## Family Camping

What's the best  
way to camp?

## Summer Activities



Moms! Make YOU  
a Priority

May 2023 // Vol. 38 No. 5

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## A note from the publisher

Happy Mothers Day! Being a mom is tough, and many mothers find themselves so focused on their children that they forget about themselves. In this issue, I included an article that helps mothers make themselves a priority (page 14). This is also my 11th issue. As I hit this milestone with ourKids Magazine, I want to thank YOU - the reader. The entire team at ourKids appreciates you!



**Andres Flores**

Author Sarah Lyons shares a few ideas on how your children can spend the summer without being attached to their phone

**Find on page 10**



14



20



Vol. 38 No. 5

May. 2023

Published by SomberSail LLC

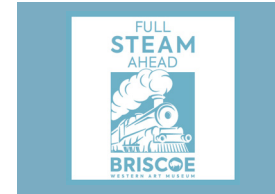
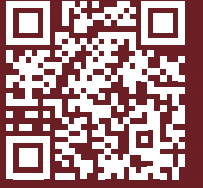
Edited by  
Andres Flores

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# Calendar

To see more upcoming events, follow the QR code or visit our website at [ourkidsmagazine.com](http://ourkidsmagazine.com)



Full STEAM Ahead at the  
Briscoe Western Art Museum  
**May 7 & June 4**  
1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

The Briscoe Western Art Museum is steaming into spring by pairing its monthly free days for local visitors with its popular “Full STEAM Ahead” educational series. Families can enjoy hands-on (and fun!) educational activities.



**Billy Elliot | H-E-B**  
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**Kid's Day Out**  
in New Braunfels  
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7:30 am - 6:00 pm

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**Big startups 4 little kids**  
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**June 3**  
10:00 am - 1:00 pm

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**Free Family Nights**  
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**June 5**  
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Explore The DoSeum's fun interactive exhibits alongside your family for free! A link for ticket reservations will be posted on [thedoseum.org](http://thedoseum.org) at 8 AM the morning of Free Family Night. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis.

Reach the publisher:  
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# Family Camping Trips— How to Make the Most of Your Getaway

Story by  
Kimberly Blaker

Camping is the ultimate in outdoor family fun and is loaded with benefits for parents and kids alike. It provides adventure and unlimited opportunities to experience the great outdoors. It's also an excellent way for kids to learn about nature, from plants and animals to the weather and skies. Historical landmarks and different regions offer lessons in history. And parents get a break from the daily responsibilities of life and a little relaxation. Not to mention, it's an affordable way for families to vacation.

## What's the best way to camp?

Your family can choose from a variety of camping options. If you love the experience of roughin' it, pitch a tent, and haul the bare necessities. Tents come in many sizes and styles, some with dividers for separate sleeping quarters. When purchasing a tent, remember capacity doesn't include luggage space. If you plan to keep belongings in your tent, opt for a larger size. Most importantly, don't forget padding or a blow-up mattress to insulate against the cold, hard ground.

If you like the idea of roughing it, yet want some of the

comforts of home, a pop-up camper is the best of both worlds. The canvas sides and pullout sections of pop-ups are surrounded by screens and give the feeling of sleeping in the fresh outdoors. Pop-ups come in several sizes and often include an icebox or mini-refrigerator, heater, air conditioning, portable toilet, shower, kitchen sink, stove, cabinets and storage space, dining table, and other necessities.

Some families prefer going in style. Travel trailers and motor homes offer a luxurious nighttime retreat after a day

of outdoor fun. The ease in loading and unloading these shelters is excellent for moving from campsite to campsite, making cross-country camping less work. Motor homes and travel trailers often have a full-size kitchen, living room complete with sofa and chairs, and separate bedrooms for comfort and privacy.

Don't overlook the option of a cozy cabin in the woods. Cabin rentals are sometimes found at campgrounds or in national forests at cabin resorts. Cabins range from basic single-room shelters containing only beds to completely furnished three



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or four-room units, including kitchenettes. When reserving a cabin, ask what is supplied before you go so you'll arrive prepared while avoiding unnecessary packing. And don't forget to ask about electricity, lights, and water.

Experienced campers with older kids might try a hike-in shelter for a real wilderness experience. Check with state and national parks for shelters that are sometimes set up along extended trails. After a day of hiking, roll out your sleeping bags under one of these small shelters for a dry night's sleep under the stars.

### Camping costs

The cost of travel can make family vacations a rare treat. But the affordability of camping may allow for frequent getaways. Overnight fees range from a free night's stay at some state park rustic sites (no showers, toilets, electricity, or water) to \$50 or more per night at many of the top KOA and Jellystone Camp Park-Resorts. These top-of-the-line campgrounds are loaded with amenities from built-in swimming pools to live entertainment.

State park campgrounds vary from state to state. Still, these are often the best deal for families interested in experiencing all that nature has to offer. Fees for overnight accommodations

in state parks typically range from \$15 to \$40. Many state parks have modern facilities, including flush toilets, showers, grassy or gravel sites, playgrounds, park stores for firewood and ice, and more. Furthermore, state parks frequently offer extensive wooded hiking or biking trails, natural wonders, historical sites, and more that isn't found at private camp resorts.

Camping also helps keep other vacation expenses to a minimum. Many families prefer cooking over the campfire to eating out. Additionally, most outdoor camping activities are free or available for minimal cost.

### Fun camping activities

Whatever your family's interests, there is plenty to see and do. Trails offer ample activities such as collecting rocks, leaves, or insects, scouting for wildlife, learning about plants and trees, and practicing survival skills. You can also go on hiking excursions, mountain biking, and horseback riding.

Lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams offer fishing, swimming, row boating or canoeing, sunbathing, and more.

Wildlife viewing is often a highlight. Look for animals early in the morning or at dusk on dirt roads and trails, in open fields surrounded by woods, and near water. Be patient, walk slowly and quietly, and don't forget binoculars.

Other activities include nature programs, nature centers, and historical sites, flying kites, rollerblading or bicycling on paved trails, and more.

When you're ready to relax, light a campfire, and enjoy reading or storytelling, play cards or board games, watch the sunset, stargaze, and roast marshmallows.

### What to take

Buy a couple of large plastic totes with lids to carry and store your camping supplies. The following are some of the basics you'll want to take.

1. Reusable plastic cups (labeled to save on washing)

2. Silverware
3. Plates and bowls
4. Paper towels, food storage bags, and tinfoil
5. A cooking source such as a one or two-burner stove
6. An aluminum pot and skillet
7. Cooking utensils and can opener
8. Coffee pot
9. Tablecloth
10. Ice chest, food, and drinks
11. Drinking water and large water container
12. Dish soap and dishcloths
13. Insect repellent and sunscreen
14. Folding chairs
15. Backpack
16. Radio, flashlight, and batteries
17. Lantern and matches
18. Firewood (unless available near your campground)
19. Knife and hatchet
20. Rope and twine
21. First-aid kit
22. Sleeping bags, blankets, and pillows
23. Air mattress or padding
24. Personal hygiene items and toilet paper
25. Towels and washcloths
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### What not to take

Don't get carried away with packing, or camping will become a chore. Make a list, then weed out items you don't really need. Portable televisions detract from outdoor fun, so leave yours at home.

Think it through before taking your pet. Some campgrounds don't allow pets, and even if they do, pets cannot be left unattended. A pet can hinder many activities, including beaches, where dogs often aren't allowed.

### Easy camp foods

There are many ways to cook. Buy a gas or liquid fuel camping stove. If electricity is available, a crockpot or electric griddle works well. You can also carry a charcoal or small gas grill or cook over an open fire.

Keep meals simple to minimize packing, preparation, and clean up. Easy choices include hamburgers, hot dogs, chicken, steak, sandwiches, eggs, bacon, sausage, crockpot meals, sweet corn,

baked potatoes, canned foods such as baked beans, tuna, chicken, spaghetti, ravioli, and soup, fresh fruit, vegetables and dip, bagels, English muffins, cereal, fruit juice, and hot cocoa.

On the other hand, if you enjoy cooking and tasty meals are one of the highlights for your family, then make the most of mealtime. With all the options for cooking, you can easily enjoy a gourmet feast.

### Camping tips

Camping is often a learn-as-you-go experience. But the following can alleviate hassles and keep your family safe.

Protect your food from animals and animals from your food by blocking access. Animals can find their way into nearly anything. Raccoons are known to lift lids right off coolers to snatch hot dogs and other treats. A cooler that latches is usually a safe bet. Any food that isn't tightly contained should be stored in your vehicle overnight.

Poor weather can strike at any time, and insect infestations can also make for a miserable experience.

Make additional shelter such as a screen tent or tarps and rope part of your camping gear.

Arrive at your camp destination ahead of the crowd. Every campsite is unique, and early arrival can assure a site that satisfies your needs.

When selecting a site, look for proximity to restrooms, the playground, electricity, and water. If you have young kids, make sure the site isn't close to a river or lake. The amount of shade you'll want may depend on the weather forecast. To avoid mud in the event of rain, choose a grassy or rock site. Also, stay away from a site that backs up to outhouses, which can smell in the heat and wind.

Know what animals are found in the area and teach your kids animal safety. Wild animals usually want to avoid humans as much as we want to avoid them. Still, they can pose risks. In the West, mountain lions have been known to snag children and even small women. In bear country, those accustomed to people sometimes get too close and result in injury. Even small animals that feel threatened may attack.



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## 10 Things Every Child Should Do This Summer

Story by Sarah Lyons

Schools out for summer! It's summer vacation and the kids are free of the early morning rush, after school homework, and have the freedom to enjoy warm weather and time with family and friends. Many parents find that with this freedom comes the battle to keep their kids off electronics. Here are some screen-free activities every kid should do this summer.

### Take it outside

Some kids may enjoy playing outside without having to be pushed out the door but others may need a little encouragement. Instead of simply telling your child to "Go play outside." Try having them design and build a kite, then go outside to fly it. You could also do a "Park Tour" by making a list of great parks in your area (ask friends for recommendations) and visit a different park each

week. Have a picnic, explore the neighborhood, set up an obstacle course, play with sidewalk chalk, toss a ball, play on the swingset, pick flowers, or take a family bike ride. The possibilities are endless and can be catered to your child's interests.

### Be a night owl

No school means no early mornings. While staying up late every night may not be the best option for young children, allowing a few late nights on lazy summer evenings can be a great way to make memories. Use a projector to watch a movie outdoors, catch fireflies in the backyard, or watch a firework show. There's something special about a warm summer evening and getting to stay up late. If you are lucky, the kids might even sleep in the next day.

*photography*  
**BY.EMMETT**  
ANDYEMMETT.COM





### Go jump in a lake

It wouldn't be summer without some swimming. Take the kids to the lake, pool, sprayground, or set up the sprinkler in the backyard. Nothing feels better than cooling off in the water on a hot summer day.

### Plant a seed

A great way to get kids outside is to have them work in the garden. This allows for plenty of outdoor time and can sometimes include daily maintenance for watering, weeding, and checking on the plants. "Grow something!" says Heather Allen of Olathe. "Anything, be it a tree, vegetable, or flower, there is something really rewarding about getting your hands in the dirt, and growing and taking care of a plant." If you choose to have a vegetable garden, get the kids involved in cooking with ingredients they have helped to grow.

### Family campout

Camping is a great summer activity to get families outside together. Some families may enjoy taking the tent to a nearby campground and unplugging for a day or two. Other families may prefer camping in the backyard so they are close to the comforts of home. Either way, put away the electronics for the day, roast marshmallows on a campfire, and enjoy the time together outdoors.

### Complete a project

Family projects are a great way to keep kids busy. Decide as a group what projects you would like to focus on this summer. Some ideas could include cleaning and remodeling (or rearranging) their bedrooms, collecting food for a food pantry, planting a garden, scrapbooking, reading an entire book series, or running a 5K.

### Learn something new

"I tell the kids, the school year is for learning what your teacher wants you to learn and summer is for learning what you want to learn." says Amy Cameron, mom of three. She suggests making a list of 2-3 topics of interest and plan to pursue them by reading books, attending camps, or doing research. Moms Erin Lorton and Stephanie Loux both suggest keeping a daily journal. "They write a few sentences about their day. It's always fun to look back on previous years." says Lorton. "We keep daily math, reading, and summer writing journals." says Loux. You can print pictures and create a keepsake for them to look back on.

### Cool off with a sweet treat

Ice cream should be on every kid's summer bucket list. There are countless ice cream and snow cone shops to visit in the metro area. Create a list of

new shops or old favorites you would like to visit this summer. You could also try making ice cream or popsicles at home.

### Get moving

It's great to be outside in the summer but sometimes it's too hot or rainy and you need to find an indoor place to burn off energy. Consider getting the kids moving by visiting an indoor trampoline place, a skating rink, rock climbing facility, or indoor aquatic center. If you want to save money and need some indoor ideas, have a dance party in the house, find Go Noodle or Cosmic Kids Yoga on YouTube, or have a push-up and situp challenge.

It's unrealistic that kids will stay off of their electronics the entire summer, but with these tips you can increase their outdoor and exercise time. They may have so much fun they forget about their tablets. A parent can dream, right?



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**Publisher note:** Moms! This one is for you. We often take for granted what our moms do for us. I chose this article because sometimes you need to take a break from mom duty and treat yourself. Happy Mothers Day!



## Moms! Make YOU a Priority

Story by Sarah Lyons

Raising kids is one of the most life-changing and rewarding times of your life but it can also be the most exhausting and draining as well. While moms typically make their kids their top priority, putting them above their own needs and wants, moms need to make time for themselves so that they can continue to be at their best when it comes to supporting and taking care of their families. Moms, it's time to make you a priority.

### Why?

#### Your mental health is a important

Being a mother has its emotional highs and lows. Your body goes through amazing changes both physically and mentally during pregnancy, birth, and the years that follow. It is important for moms to make their mental health a priority. Ask your significant other or a trusted friend to help you monitor when you are struggling. Ask for help if you feel you are not at your best emotionally. Taking care of your family on a day-to-day basis can be draining on your emotional

reserves, but when you have participated in activities that make you feel happy and healthy, it is easier to be attentive and supportive to those around you.

#### Your physical health is a priority

If you are physically exhausted, it is hard to be patient with your kids or get anything productive accomplished at home or work. Getting good rest, exercising, and eating healthy are important for moms to feel at their best. It's also important for moms to make their health important by visiting the doctor, dentist, and other appointments to maintain health on a regular basis. So often moms will delay their own scheduled doctor visits to make time for their families but routine check-ups can prevent issues before they arise.

#### How to make yourself a priority?

##### Find your tribe

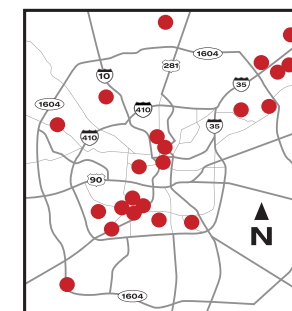
Having a group of friends that understand what it's like to raise children, work, maintain a healthy



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lifestyle, and commit to a loving marriage is important for moms to feel “normal” and supported. Moms groups (like MOPS), online meetups or groups, book clubs, or church groups are great places to meet other moms that you have things in common with and connect with.

### Set aside time

Between running errands, extracurricular activities, housework, and spending time with your kids it can be hard to set aside time for yourself. Spending time alone, with your spouse (without your kids), and with friends is so important for moms to feel energized for

another day. Add time for you to the family calendar to assure that it happens on a regular basis and any child care needs are met.

### Exercise

A good exercise routine not only keeps you healthy and fit, but it can also help you feel better about yourself as well as give you an extra energy boost for the long days of mothering. Taking time for exercise can also give you a chance to be alone and listen to a podcast, audiobook, or music you enjoy while working out. If your exercise takes you outside, you also get an added boost

of Vitamin D which has been proven to help you feel happier too.

### Treat yourself

Moms work hard. Allow yourself a treat such as a coffee, a new outfit, a fresh haircut, pedicure, or a sweet treat on occasion. Giving yourself permission to treat yourself can boost your mood and acknowledge that you work hard and deserve something special. You don't have to spend a lot of time or money, it's more about putting yourself first on occasion.

### Talk to someone

Sometimes we just need



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## Extra: Quick Ways to Boost Your Mood

After taking care of your family's needs, working, and doing household chores moms can feel like their gas tank is running on empty which can drain your energy and your mood. Here are some quick ways to boost your mood.

\* Sing along - Turn up your favorite song and sing along. Dancing and singing are sure to boost your mood.

\* Laugh it off - Call a friend that always makes you laugh. If your child is doing something that is frustrating, try to laugh it off. Turn on a funny TV show or podcast. Laughter is the best medicine.

\* Take a bath - A relaxing soak in the tub is always a good mood booster and can help tense muscles relax helping you feel physically better as well.

\* Take a walk - Physical exercise and a break from your house and chores is a great way to change your mood.

\* Let it go - Do you have piles of dishes and laundry to do? Is it overwhelming? Let it go. You can't leave it forever, but you can for now. Find something fun to do instead, just for the day. You might find after a break away, you come back to it with a better attitude.

\* Take a nap - There is nothing better than a nap to help you recharge your batteries. If your baby is sleeping, take the time to rest as well. If you have older kids, put in a movie and rest next to them on the couch. You will feel recharged and ready for the rest of the day.

someone to talk to about our feelings, what is going on in our lives, and share the details of everyday life. One way moms make themselves a priority is to find a friend or family member you can chat with on a regular basis. Some may find it helpful to talk to a counselor if you have a lot to work through and have dealt with depression or feel like you could use some unbiased advice.

### Ask for help

Moms are used to helping others and many of us have a hard time reaching out and asking for help. However, when a friend asks, we are the first to offer assistance. Give others a chance to help you. Set up a carpool so you are not always the one playing taxi with the kids for their after school activities, accept help when offered, or trade babysitting with a friend so you can have a much needed date night. If your significant other offers to help out around the house, let them, even if it isn't exactly the way you would have done it. Accepting help can be a big relief and can give moms the chance for some much needed time to focus on themselves.

### Take up a hobby

What do you love to do? Many moms find they have forgotten the hobbies they used to enjoy prior to kids. Make time for yourself and your interests. Seek out an old hobby or find a new one - reading, running, sewing, scrapbooking - whatever activity gets you excited is what you need to make time for. Whether you do your hobby with a group of friends or on your own, you will not regret making time for something that is important to you. It's not possible to put yourself first all the time when you are a busy mom but that doesn't mean you shouldn't set aside time when you are the priority. It's important for your mental and physical health and well-being and will make you a better mom overall.



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# A Therapeutic Summer Camp Alternative

Story by  
Kimberly Blaker

If you have a troubled teen, the prospect of summer break may fill you with dread. The school year provides at least some structure and support. But the long summer stretch leaves at-risk teens ample time and opportunity to engage in dangerous choices. If you're a working parent, you may be especially concerned about the lack of supervision for your adolescent and your ability to enforce consequences. Summer break is a perfect time to send your troubled teen away for an intervention.

You may be tempted to send your difficult teen to a boot camp, with the promise to straighten out your delinquent youth through strict discipline and military structure. The idea of sending your child away to return with a changed attitude, now respectful of your authority, can be appealing to exhausted parents who feel in over their heads. Boot camps, however, are not all they're



cracked up to be. The boot camp environment may work to instill discipline in some teens. But this often doesn't apply once teens return to their home environment. More problematic, the harsh, and even abusive approach many of these camps take can be damaging to teens. Often, teens act out when they're experiencing internal mental or emotional distress. Not only do boot camps fail to identify and resolve these underlying problems, but the measures they use can also exacerbate teens' mental health problems.

Short-term treatment centers and wilderness programs are safer and better options for teens with moderate to serious issues. They're more beneficial to troubled teens and their families and usually are part of a treatment program to help teens get the help they need to reduce problematic behaviors. These programs are about healing teens in a supportive environment instead of just training youth to be subservient through harsh tactics. This approach, with its focus on mental and emotional health, creates lasting positive change.

For teens with mild to moderate problems, mental health summer camps are another option to consider. These programs are also far less risky than boot camps for teen's physical and emotional health. Mental health summer camps can help prevent teens' issues from spiraling out of control.

How can a mental health summer camp help my troubled teen?

Going away interrupts negative patterns - Often, when teens are struggling,

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they're involved in social groups and have developed routines that reinforce negative behavior. Even when youth recognize their behavior is unhealthy, they often feel unable to break away from those patterns. While away, adolescents are removed from negative influences and are allowed to start fresh.

The goal is to support, not punish - Though your teen may still feel like being sent to a mental health summer camp is a punishment, that isn't the goal of their stay. Instead of spending their time being punished and told they're bad, teens experience interesting, engaging, and even fun opportunities designed to help them succeed.

May be run by trained staff and counselors - Mental health summer camps may have staff and counselors who are trained and licensed and who want to help your adolescent. These professionals understand psychology and development and are experienced in working with at-risk teens. Therapy sessions for both individuals and groups may also be part of the program, which provides structured support and a safe outlet for talking about the challenges teens' are experiencing. If you're considering a mental health summer camp for your teen, ask about the credentials of the camp's staff.

They address mental and emotional health - When run by mental health professionals,

summer camps focus on imbalances in mental health and emotional wellness that lead to bad choices. This approach aims to fix the core problem instead of temporarily treating the symptoms.

Lessen feelings of isolation - Many mental health summer camps offer sessions for teens facing the same problems or with similar disorders at the heart of the youth's struggles. The programs provide opportunities for group sessions with other teens they can relate to and work with together.

Nature is inherently healing - Studies show that exposure to nature and the outdoors can help reduce anxiety and depression - two common mood disorders among teens who act out.

Activities promote interpersonal growth - Mental health summer camps have team-building activities. These help participants learn to work with others successfully and communicate more effectively. The programs are also good bonding experiences. Teens can make positive connections with others while working on changing their lives for the better.

Activities lead to personal growth - Counseling and other activities help teens to build confidence in themselves by accomplishing tasks and learning to set goals and be responsible. An improved

positive view of themselves and the self-confidence gained from learning new skills can lead to better choices.

Clear connection to home life - Counselors and staff understand that to have a lasting effect outside of the program, they need to help teens make connections to the real world. Staff support teens in taking the lessons they learned and apply them at home for more authentic changes.

They promote physical health - Teens engage in healthy habits like appropriate physical exercise, exposure to fresh air, and eating, or even preparing, nutritious food. Improved physical health supports mental health and teaches young people habits they can continue at home.

The summer months provide the perfect opportunity for getting help to turn your teen's life around. Summer camps with a mental health focus provide a positive experience and support the development of better mental health and connection with others.

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