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Homeschooling

SUMMER 2024

and beyond

Top concerns
keeping parents
up at night

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FINALS**

Success &
recovery

**COOKING &
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Fun & festive
holiday treats

**SCREEN
TIME AND
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Google unveils
School Time

**Supporting
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**UNLOCKING
CREATIVITY AND
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The power of independent play

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Why kids need boredom more than ever

As the year winds down, many parents find themselves focused on two things: making it through the last stretch of the school year and planning how to keep the kids busy over the long December break. However, Dalena van der Westhuizen, cognitive development specialist, executive function skills coach and co-owner of BrainAbility, reminds us of a surprising alternative – embracing boredom



There's a powerful alternative to the endless line-up of holiday activities, planned outings and screen time: boredom. Far from being an enemy, boredom is a gift that allows children of all ages to develop critical skills. It can play a vital role in helping children develop essential life skills, encouraging creativity, patience and resilience in ways that structured activities often can't.

Boredom fosters creativity and imagination

Research shows that when children are left with “nothing to do”, they're actually given an opportunity to create. With no structured activities or screens to entertain them, they're more likely to invent games and engage in make-believe adventures or new activities. According to a study published in the *Academy of Management Journal*, boredom prompts people to seek novelty, which leads to more creative ideas. Whether toddlers or teenagers, unstructured time allows youngsters to dive deep into their imagination and become their own source of entertainment.

Learning self-regulation and patience One often overlooked benefit of boredom is the way it helps children develop patience. When a child faces boredom and works through it independently, they learn to handle feelings of restlessness and self-regulate emotions. This ability to tolerate and work through low-stimulation situations is crucial

for building executive function skills, such as impulse control and emotional resilience. Researchers at the UK's University of Central Lancashire suggest that this self-regulation skill helps young people develop patience, an important attribute in school, work and social relationships.

Boredom encourages

problem-solving skills From toddlers constructing towers to teens exploring new hobbies, problem-solving skills thrive in moments of downtime. Left to themselves, children often find ways to self-entertain, whether through games, exploring the outdoors or diving into a new creative project. The absence of scheduled activities encourages them to think critically about how to spend their time, helping them develop resourcefulness and adaptability.

Boredom improves mental health and reduces stress

For teenagers, in particular, a break from the demands of school and social life can be a mental reset. Free, unstructured time gives them the opportunity to reflect and decompress, offering mental clarity and reducing stress. Studies published by *Psychology Today* reveal that downtime allows the brain to consolidate memories and recharge. High school and tertiary students, in particular,



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often lead fast-paced lives and the chance to pause can enhance their well-being and give them a renewed sense of focus and motivation.

Encouraging a healthy relationship with technology

In today's digital world, children



are rarely without electronic devices and boredom is often managed with a screen. However, extended time without structured activities can encourage kids to rediscover non-digital sources of joy. A balanced relationship with technology becomes easier when children have developed hobbies and interests they can turn to beyond their devices.

The take-away While the December holidays may tempt us to pack our calendar with activities, remember that it's okay to let children be bored. Allowing them these hours, free from constant stimulation, offers growth in creativity, patience, mental health and much more. Embracing boredom as a natural part of life gives our children space to learn, explore and thrive in ways that structured activities can't always offer.