



Things to Think About!

Putting Some “ZIP” Into Summer

By Linda Jorgensen



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Recommended Reading:

<http://www.myaspergerschild.com/2011/06/summer-activities-for-aspergers.html>

Many cities offer free or inexpensive activities at local recreation centers. Many cities offer safe parks and recreation centers to provide a wide variety of activities and classes for their residents. Municipal recreation centers sometimes provide sign-ups for sports teams in the local area. Most municipal recreation centers offer classes for all ages from toddlers enrolled in Mommy and Me classes to seniors taking yoga for seniors.

http://www.magicyellow.com/category/Recreation_Centers/Cities.html

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The first week of our summer break we make a conscious effort as a family to slow down our winter routine. For starters we sit down as a family and discuss what we want to do for the summer. Summer is our family down time, our time to relax. We've all been working hard and with a more flexible summer schedule we're going to take a break from our usual hectic routine. We want a rest.

This year, as we sat down together to decide what we were going to plan for the summer, we were informed we needed to talk about adding a bit of “ZIP” to our summer plans. Yep. “ZIP” was the word. Apparently our daughter feels we need a change up in the family summer routine.

Granted the economy is still not in the best of shape and travel for our family will always be a bit problematic but that doesn't mean a summer has to be dull and dreary. Nor does it mean it has to be completely at home. A slower routine, taking time to enjoy the activities you are involved in and keeping things simple can make for a fun and relaxing season for the entire family.

For the first week we sleep in. We do this every year. Then we start a more flexible schedule for the rest of summer. Not only do we all get a little extra sleep in the morning this allows for nighttime activities we would otherwise lose sleep for. Movies at the city park after dark, star gazing parties, family movie festivals, to name a few. Sleeping in lets us stay up late and have a little fun. Until Fall, the only one who has an alarm set is Dad.

This year instead of camp activities that none of my children are interested in we're making up our own “activity calendar.” First to be reviewed, though, was the weekly therapy and doctor appointment schedule. This is crucial in this household. Some appointments just cannot be missed but during the summer, **and with the permission of our physician and therapists**, we scale back these visits to a reasonable level that won't cause problems. We've found a periodic short break can be beneficial both for our daughter and the rest of the family. That's a lot of driving and time out of the day that we can put back in for play. We're able to return to our regular treatment schedule later in the season mentally refreshed and better able to “get to work”.

Our Family Summer Activity List

Once we all sat down and began to make a list of what everyone wanted to do this summer I could see it was taking on a life of its own! We had to set a few limits and make a few suggestions but managed to come up with a manageable list of family activities. Here are a few of our favorites.

- Spiff It Up Day ~ Technically a “get rid of all that old stuff that's in the way” activity. The rules are simple. Everyone gets a box to fill

with items to be donated to charity and a bag for trash. Set a timer for 15 minutes and GO! Each person then goes through their room including closets, dressers, etc. and clears out all items they are no longer using, wearing, or want. This includes basic clutter and any trash they run across. Only items that can be easily seen are removed. Parents get to do the larger spaces. Not to be confused with a Spring cleaning, this is a simple, “See something that needs to go? Get rid of it.” We’ll do a deeper clean later. The person with the most in their box gets to choose the flavor of ice cream after we drop the boxes off at the charity shop.

- Moon gazing in the back yard with the family telescope and binoculars. Invite the neighbors and have ‘s’mores in the fire pit afterwards.
- Creative (supervised) cooking out on the grill. “Something different”.
- Make up new ice cream recipes
- Family Arts in the Park. Take art supplies to our local park with a picnic lunch and see what creative masterpieces we can make. Lunch al fresco afterwards.
- Girl’s movie night while Mom and Dad take a date night! The girls can have a slumber party with a respite provider and we can have a night out on our own.
- Train ride down the Provo Canyon. (Can’t wait to see what the bathrooms look like on an old steam passenger train...)
- A family service project (to be determined)
- Friday night movies at the city park with friends. Take popcorn for munching and bubble soap along for blowing.
- Invite neighbor friends over for a “Manners Dinner”. We’ll prepare a meal and everyone will practice (and maybe learn a few more) good table manners.

Local Activities or Short Day Trips

We still have a hard time traveling very far with our daughter and generally only plan a single, week-long, “away” vacation per year. During the summer months day trips are a family favorite. We’ve learned to take several 4 day weekends over the summer which stretches out our family play time. We’ll travel one or two of those days keeping within easy driving distance of home. The best part about staying local is being able to sleep in our own beds at night and knowing exactly where the reliable, accessible, restrooms are.

This year, along with our regular standards, we plan on driving up nearby canyons for picnic suppers in the evening, enjoy fireworks displays and new small town activities on the weekend. Since we live in a cluster a small towns there is something going every weekend all summer long and we have yet to see all of them.

But a summer just wouldn’t be complete without a trip to our favorite out-of-state rest area, just over the border in Idaho. I know that’s a funny destination but there’s almost always something fun to do there every weekend. The fun comes in driving up and seeing who’s doing what when we get there. It’s a large rest area just south of Malad, Idaho. BLM checking boats for zebra mollusks, punch and cookies from one of the local Veteran’s Associations, displays, bands playing, busloads of tourists from many different countries and other activities and displays. You never know what you’ll see. Travel does not have to be far to be fun. And the plus with this trip is the restroom is ADA for sure!

Don’t know what’s going on in your town or county? Contact your town or county tourism/recreation office, consult a map of your area or contact your state Tourism/Travel Council for destination and event listings in your town or area. The internet can offer excellent destination resources with specific details and contact information with addresses, directions and phone numbers. This information will be extremely useful if you have specific access needs such as wheelchair access. A little bit of research will go a long way in organizing and planning a great day’s outing the entire family will enjoy.

A Day Off

Personally, this is my favorite activity. We’ve learned to deliberately leave several days each month totally blank and unscheduled and I look forward to them. These are days to be used however each family member sees fit. Napping, junking, reading, games in the yard, whatever we want to do. Being flexible with our schedules allows us time to enjoy more fun if the opportunity arises. After all, it’s summer. Time to relax and have some fun!