

## Cooling "Cabin Fever"

Well, here we are into our THIRD long month of winter. Months and months of a steady diet of indoor activities and only experiencing the outdoors when dashing from the car or bus to the indoors, can promote negative behaviors in kids and drive you crazy trying to occupy them. If gray days and lousy weather has gotten you and your kids down, be aware you are not alone! However, there are many activities you and your children can do both indoors and outdoors to help alleviate 'Cabin Fever'.

First and foremost, it is important to remember that doctors agree and many scientific studies show, that neither cold weather nor wet clothing, shoes or hair cause colds or the flu. Viruses transmitted from person to person cause colds and flu. It is also important for your child to breath fresh air daily, not months of piped in heated air. So go on outside and try these tips incorporating indoor and outdoor activities for cooling cabin fever.

### Outdoors

- **Nature walks/collages** Bundle up your gang, give each a small paper bag and go out exploring. Gather items from nature; interesting leaves, acorns, oak galls, pine cones and needles, bird feathers, rocks, twigs and more, the list is as varied as your neighborhoods. Talk about what your children see and hear along the way, discuss changes in the weather, plants and animals at this time of year. When you're back home, let each child create their own collage by gluing the objects to a variety of paper or cardboard for a centerpiece decoration.
- **Puddle Jumping** As adults we forget how much fun it was to jump in rain puddles. Again, bundle up, put on old shoes or better yet galoshes or rain boots if you have them, and go for it. Your child will have a ball doing what comes naturally. Afterwards, come inside dry off and have something warm to drink with the kids, while explaining that you OK'd this activity for today, that they should not do puddle jumping without you!
- **Snow/Ice Murals** If you live where there is snow or it snows unexpectedly in your area, of course you will have the requisite snowball fights and building snow persons with your child. You can also make snow murals by filling handle squirt bottles with colored water (add food coloring or washable paint), and spraying the snow with the colored water. Children love to create and will enjoy blending colors on a large scale, with the size of your snow bank as their only limitation. If you don't live where it snows you can freeze blocks of ice in milk cartons, ice cream cartons or any other peel-able container and do the same type of spray painting.
- **Tree Branch Photo Mobiles** Take another walk with your child and choose a small but interesting branch from a bare tree, for each of their rooms or areas in a room. When you arrive home you will need either fishing line, colored yarns or heavy thread and your box of photos. Go through the photos with your child, talking about that summer trip to Marine World or camping, the birthday party with friends or that trip to Grandmas and Grandpas. Help your child attach the photos at varying lengths and places on the branch then hang in their room to enjoy. The mobile can be changed any time your child is bored by simply taking out the photo box and letting them change the pictures to another remembered trip, party or activity.

### Indoors

- **Building Forts or Secret Hiding Places** All you need for this activity is to make space (may have to move the coffee table or lamps) and allow the kids to use the sofa cushions, pillows, and sheets to create their own forts. The children and their imaginations will do the rest, as they work alone or together to transform the place into their secret space.
- **Movement and Dance** – Children love music and naturally move and dance when music is on, so take advantage of that to release energy. Play musical chairs, do the hokey-pokey, exercise or do aerobics to music, get out the mini-tramp and jump to the beat, or clean the house together to music.

- **Flashlight Tag** When the skies are gray and dark it's the perfect time to turn off all the lights get out flashlights and play flashlight tag. Again you may have to move a bit of furniture for safety, then just try to 'tag' each other with the rays from the flashlights on the body. If the children tire of this or you need to slow them down a bit, they can play follow the leader with the beams from their flashlights on surfaces in the house.
- **Shadow Dancing** You will need a slide projector or strong light, a blank wall or curtain area and space to dance. Simply turn off all other lights, place the projector or strong light in a safe position across the room, turn on the music and let the kids dance and watch their shadows. A great energy releaser!
- **Balloon Stomp Game** You will need balloons, rubber bands and music. Blow up the balloons and attach a rubber band to the tied end, each person stretches a rubber band/balloon over their feet so that the balloon part is at the outer ankle. Start the music – each person gets moving/dancing while trying to 'stomp' and pop the balloons on the other people dancing. As the balloons pop you put on more and keep dancing/popping, the person with the least balloons on their ankle is the winner.
- **Have Friends Over** The best way to alleviate boredom for your kids is to have a friend over to play. Often we think our own kids are enough on a rainy day, however, children usually do better when someone new is there to play with. Whether you use activities discussed here or just schedule a friend to play, it helps add variety for your child and two imaginations are better than one! Also, the other parent has to reciprocate and ask your child over, so you get a free afternoon every now and then!

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