

The Rhythm of Summer

Summer is just around the corner and there is an excitement that comes in my home as my children recognize up and coming space in their lives. They really enjoy school and the school year, with its structure, leaves less opportunity for downtime.

Summer allows an opening for ample time to fall into a slower rhythm. Not all of us have this option but because I work from home I get to offer a place for my children to follow their own rhythm.

Paying attention to the natural schedule of an infant or young child you see a healthy rhythm modeled; sleep, eat, action, rest, quiet time, action, eat ... Older children if offered space for unstructured time find their own tempo as well.

In the summer my son has a friend who comes down from Alaska. We don't schedule a lot because it's such a lovely occasion for my child to fall into a rhythm with his friend. I love watching and listening to them at play crafting a world of their own. They know I am available but they create their own day without adult direction.

Last summer they found all sorts of activities outside and in, quiet and noisy... and they have a pulse to their days and to the weeks he is here. That rhythm is something so beautiful to watch, it reminds me of a dance, they weave in and out of quiet and lively with such simplicity, joy and naturalness. I think there is a part of me that grieves the loss of those moments for all of us. My son's natural rhythm is active and my daughters is quiet. I honor both and at the same time offer each opportunity to experience the other.

We don't often acknowledge how hard the pace of our lives can be on our health and the health of our children and yet we are beginning to notice. More studies are being done on depression and stress related to children. Depression is increasing. Children are affected by our pace, by the pressure to do and succeed.

What can we as parents do to support them? We can pay attention to their natural rhythm, we can become more aware of how we feel and what needs are met for our children and ourselves by filling up their days.

There are ways in more structured environments to honor your child's pace and you may need to seek it out. Most day care and preschools have a flow to their day. Look to see how that fits with your child's natural rhythm. Busier, slower, time in natural settings, rest, what would work best for your child?

Does exploring a slower rhythm appeal to you?

When I choose to slow down, I am more present and I have moments with family and friends that I cherish. That's why I choose it; it has great meaning for me.

Some tips for slow summer days:

Discuss the idea of allowing life to flow naturally with your family. Pick up your calendar and choose some days for unstructured time. Clear your calendar for those days. If you lead a really busy life start out small, choose a half-day to start.

Some families choose not to drive anywhere, and some choose not to use any electronics, while others choose to go to the lake and be in a natural setting. Start with what feels best for your family.

It can be uncomfortable to “not get anything done”. Simply notice your discomfort and know that it is not all of you. There is a place in each of us that can respond to rest, relaxation and play.

Take a walk, play in the sandbox, walk to a park, share a story about your childhood, paint a picture, play basketball, listen to your child, play a board game, rest, lie on the grass and look at the clouds, share what you see with your child, follow your child’s lead for an hour, write a letter to someone you love together, take a nap, read aloud...

Savor the moments!

Carol Delmonico Professional Life Coach www.intobalancecoaching.com