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STRESS-FREE Summer Activities for the Children

When school is out for the summer, many parents are at their wit's end about how to fill two months of their children's free time. Images of summertime are usually cast in a light of hot, lazy, relaxing days on the beach, but the reality for most working families is the struggle to balance the demands of adult work schedules with providing safe activities for children.

This dilemma often results in hectic, stress-filled days comparable to those during the school year. While summer camp is an option for some, the cost of day and overnight camps can be too expensive for many families' budgets. Structured activities are beneficial, but parents and caregivers should also keep in mind the advantages of unstructured time for children.

So what does one do to keep young children busy, yet also allow them to enjoy the summer months? A wealth of opportunities for fun, educational, and even relaxing activities is available. Here are some tips that may be useful for families and caregivers:

VISIT THE LIBRARY.

Until recently, libraries offered little or nothing for children under three years of age, but in the past few years, many have introduced programs for toddlers.

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TRAVEL TIPS: When You Want to Go on a Trip, Don't Get Taken for a Ride

Whether reserving a hotel room, buying plane tickets, or making other travel arrangements, these tips will help you get a deal that delivers what you are promised.

- Plan as far ahead as you can. Special deals on hotel rooms and airline seats often sell out very quickly.
- Be flexible in your travel plans. Hotels usually offer better rates on days when they expect fewer guests. Once you get a fare quote from an airline, ask if you could save money by leaving a day earlier or later, by taking a different flight on the same day, or using a different airport. Changing planes during your trip is sometimes cheaper than a nonstop flight.
- Check out the seller. Ask tour operators and travel agents whether they belong to a professional association, then check to see if they are members in good standing. Contact your state or local consumer protection agency and the Better Business Bureau to find their complaint history.
- Comparison shop. Determine the complete cost of the trip in dollars, including all service charges, taxes, processing fees, and any other possible costs.
- Beware of unusually cheap prices and freebies. It could be a scam and you could end up paying more than the cost of a regular package tour.
- Make sure you understand the terms of the deal. If you're told that you've won a free vacation, ask if you have to buy something else in order to get it. If the destination is a beach resort, ask the seller how far the hotel is from the beach. Then ask the hotel.
- Ask about cancellation policies. You may want to look into trip insurance for added protection.

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Children and adults can participate in activities that may include reading aloud, storytelling, finger-plays, rhymes, and songs.

Preschoolers usually enjoy the group activities offered by libraries, where they can participate in puppet shows and arts and crafts activities. For children in primary school, there are variations of the storytelling hours that often include discussions and presentations by the children themselves, as well as summer reading programs. Many public libraries also offer training courses for children in using different software or educational programs.

DISCOVER GEOGRAPHY.

What makes a place special? What are the physical characteristics of your local area? Take children for a walk around your local area and look at what makes it unique. Point out how it is similar to other places you have been and how it is different. If you live near a park, a lake, a river or a stream, take your children there and spend time

talking about its uses. Read stories about distant places with children or sing songs to teach geography. Make a wish list of places you would like to visit with your child. Look them up on a map and plan a trip – real or pretend.

VIEW AND CREATE COLLECTIONS.

Go to a children's museum to view hands-on exhibits or suggest that your children start a 'collection' and build their own museum. They can collect natural materials, such as acorns and leaves from a local park or sea shells from the beach.

LEARN ABOUT NATURE.

Older children can learn about weather by using a map to look up the temperature of cities around the world and discovering how hot each gets in the summer. Watch cloud formations and imagine. Do the shapes look like horses, ducks, or other animals?

At night, depending on their age, camp out in a tent in the back garden. Create a treasure map for children to find hidden treats in the yard. Read about your local birds and flowers, and if possible, bicycle ride to a nearby park to find them.

USE COMMUNITY RESOURCES.

Watch for special events, such as free outdoor music festivals or concerts. Many communities host evening concerts in local parks – pack a picnic dinner and enjoy time with your family. People are resources too – collectors, painters, and backyard naturalists may live in your area, eager to share their knowledge with children.

RAINY DAY ACTIVITIES.

Summertime often brings thunder clouds. On days when outdoor activities are not possible, you can share family history and photos with your children. Pull out the old videotapes of past family gatherings and events. Prepare an indoor picnic with your child or cook dinner together.

Whatever the activity, children can enjoy and appreciate the summer months in ways that are both educational and stress reducing for all involved!

Workplace Options (Reviewed 2014). Stress-free summer activities for the children. London: Author.



Surviving OFFICE POLITICS

Office politics can either be a positive or negative influence on your career. If you aren't successful in dealing with it, you can lose your job, get demoted, or be alienated from key projects or people. If you are successful in dealing with politics, you can gain access to key influential players inside the company and even gain a promotion.

If you want to advance in your company, create more success, increase your responsibility, and work on high profile projects, learn how to survive office politics that exist in your company and group.

Here are five ways to survive office politics and put the power of politics to work for you:

1. BE LIKED

If you look around at the people who play the political game the best, they are the ones who get everyone to like them. The first key is getting people to like you, make sure they feel you are on their side. When you are liked, people are less inclined to battle you when the politics start to involve you or your work. When you get along with people, it makes it easier for others to support your ideas.

2. KEEP IT PROFESSIONAL AT ALL TIMES.

No matter how frustrated, irritated or short-tempered you become, it's vital you keep your professional composure. Things will affect you at work that you don't want to react to and lose yourself. Remember that part of the political game is keeping yourself level headed and composed.

3. DON'T WHINE AND COMPLAIN.

It's easy to complain about management, your boss, other people, your workload, deadlines, and projects. Also, you will find many others who will join you in the complaint game because it's a nice release and feels good to find others who share your frustrations. However, whining and complaining is a passive approach that is about standing on the sidelines and judging, versus proactively working toward eliminating the cause of the problem.

4. DON'T MAKE ENEMIES OR BURN BRIDGES.

There will be people at work you won't like or respect. It's important to not let this affect your ability to get along with them. It's easy to make enemies or have someone not like you or you not like them. However, this makes your job more difficult and just expands the work politics that already existed.

5. DON'T MAKE OTHERS LOOK BAD.

Making others look bad brings work politics to an elevated level. Most of the time, you don't consciously try make someone look bad. However, you can be careless or not aware of the impact of your actions on others. Actively try to make people look good because this will come back and look favorably on you.

Garfinkle, J. (n.d.). *Surviving office politics*. Retrieved August 18, 2016, from <http://www.garfinkleexecutivecoaching.com>

PET OWNERS: Prepare for Emergencies Now

*Preparing for your pets makes sense.
Get ready now.*

If you are like millions of animal owners worldwide, your pet is an important member of your household. The likelihood that you and your animals will survive an emergency such as a fire or flood, tornado, or terrorist attack depends largely on emergency planning that is done today. Some of the things you can do to prepare for the unexpected, such as assembling an animal emergency-supply kit and developing a pet care buddy system, are the same for any emergency. Whether you decide to stay put in an emergency or evacuate to a safer location, you will need to make plans in advance for your pets. Keep in mind that what's best for you is typically what's best for your animals.

If you must evacuate, take your pets with you if possible. However, if you are going to a public shelter, it is important to understand that animals may not be allowed inside. Plan in advance for shelter alternatives that will work for both you and your pets.

Make a back-up emergency plan in case you can't care for your animals. Develop a buddy system with neighbors, friends, and relatives to make sure that someone is available to care for or evacuate your pets if you are unable to do so. Be prepared to improvise and use what you have on hand to make it on your own for at least three days, maybe longer.

PREPARE! GET A PET EMERGENCY-SUPPLY KIT.

Just as you do with your family's emergency supply kit, think first about the basics for survival, particularly food and water. Consider two kits. In one, put everything you and your pets will need to stay where you are. The other should be a lightweight, smaller version you can take with you if you and your pets have to get away.

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TRAVEL TIPS: When You Want to Go on a Trip, Don't Get Taken for a Ride

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The Travel Insurance Comparison Site® (<https://www.insuremytrip.com>) offers pricing and policy information on plans from different companies and describes the different forms of policies available.

- Insist on written confirmations. Ask for written proof of reservations and dates.
- Pay by credit card. It's not unusual to make a deposit or even pay in full for travel services before the trip. A credit card gives you the right to dispute charges for services that were misrepresented or never delivered. If a travel agent or service provider tells you that you can't leave for at least two months, be very cautious—the deadline for disputing a credit card charge is 60 days and most scam artists know this.

In some states, travel sellers have to be registered and insured. Advance payments for travel must be placed in an escrow account until the services are provided. Prizes or "free gifts" may also be regulated. Contact your state or local consumer protection agency to find out about your rights and how to file complaints. The American Society of Travel Agents will also help resolve disputes with member agents.

USA.gov. (Updated 2014, September 3). *Tips for planning a trip*. Retrieved September 11, 2014, from <http://www.usa.gov>



PET OWNERS: Prepare for Emergencies Now continued from page 4

Plus, be sure to review your kits regularly to ensure that their contents, especially foods and medicines, are fresh.

- **Food:** Keep at least three days of food in an airtight, waterproof container.
- **Water:** Store at least three days of water specifically for your pets, in addition to water you need for yourself and your family.
- **Medicines and Medical Records:** Keep an extra supply of medicines your pet takes on a regular basis in a waterproof container.
- **First Aid Kit:** Talk to your veterinarian about what is most appropriate for your pet's emergency medical needs. Most kits should include cotton bandage rolls, bandage tape and scissors, antibiotic ointment, flea and tick prevention, latex gloves, isopropyl alcohol, and saline solution. Include a pet first-aid reference book.
- **Collar with ID Tag and Harness or Leash:** Your pet should wear a collar with its rabies tag and identification at all times. Include a back-up leash, collar, and ID tag in your pet's emergency supply kit. In addition, place copies of your pet's registration information, adoption papers, vaccination documents, and medical records in a clean plastic bag or waterproof container, and also add them to your kit. You should also consider talking with your veterinarian about permanent identification, such as

microchipping (if your pet isn't already) and enrolling your pet in a recovery database.

- **Crate or Other Pet Carrier:** If you need to evacuate in an emergency situation, take your pets and animals with you, provided that it is practical to do so. In many cases, your ability to do so will be aided by having a sturdy, safe, and comfortable crate or carrier ready for transporting your pet. The carrier should be large enough for your pet to stand, turn around, and lie down in.
- **Sanitation:** Include pet litter and a litter box (if appropriate), newspapers, paper towels, plastic trash bags, and household chlorine bleach to provide for your pet's sanitation needs. You can use bleach as a disinfectant (dilute 9 parts water to 1 part bleach), or in an emergency you can also use it to purify water. Use approximately 16 drops of regular household liquid bleach per four liters of water. Do not use scented or color-safe bleaches, or those with added cleaners.
- **A Picture of You and Your Pet Together:** If you become separated from your pet during an emergency, a picture of you and your pet together will help you document ownership and allow others to assist you in identifying your pet. Include detailed information about species, breed, age, sex, color, and distinguishing characteristics.
- **Familiar Items:** Put favorite toys, treats, or bedding in your kit. Familiar items can help reduce stress for your pet.

PLAN WHAT YOU WILL DO IN AN EMERGENCY.

Be prepared to assess the situation. Use whatever you have on hand to take care of yourself and ensure your pet's safety during an emergency. Depending on your circumstances and the nature of the emergency, the first important decision is whether you stay put or get away. You should understand and plan for both possibilities. Use common sense and the information you are learning here to determine if there is immediate danger.

In any emergency, local authorities may or may not immediately be able to provide information on what is happening and what you should do. However, watch TV, listen to the radio, or check the Internet for instructions. If you're specifically told to evacuate, shelter-in-place or seek medical treatment, do so immediately.

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PET OWNERS: Prepare for Emergencies Now

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CREATE A PLAN TO GET AWAY.

Plan how you will assemble your pets, and anticipate where you will go. If you must evacuate, take your pets with you if it is practical. If you go to a public shelter, keep in mind your animals may not be allowed inside. Secure appropriate lodging in advance depending on the number and type of animals in your care. Consider family or friends willing to take in you and your pets in an emergency. Other options may include a hotel that takes pets or a boarding facility, such as a kennel or veterinary hospital, that is near an evacuation facility or your family's meeting place. Find out before an emergency happens if any of these facilities in your area might be viable options for you and your pets.

DEVELOP A BUDDY SYSTEM.

Plan with neighbors, friends, or relatives to make sure that someone is available to care for or evacuate your pets if you are unable to do so. Talk with your pet care buddy about your evacuation plans, and show your buddy where you keep your pet's emergency supply kit. Also designate specific locations, one in your immediate neighborhood and another farther away, where you will meet in an emergency.

TALK TO YOUR PET'S VETERINARIAN ABOUT EMERGENCY PLANNING.

Discuss the types of things that you should include in your pet's emergency first-aid kit. Get the names of vets or veterinary hospitals in other cities where you might need to seek temporary shelter. You should also consider talking with your veterinarian about permanent identification, such as microchipping (if your pet isn't already), and enrolling your pet in a recovery database. If your pet is microchipped, keeping your emergency contact information up to date and listed with a reliable recovery database is essential to you being reunited with your pet.

GATHER CONTACT INFORMATION FOR EMERGENCY ANIMAL TREATMENT.

Make a list of contact information and addresses of area animal control agencies and emergency veterinary hospitals. Keep one copy of these phone numbers with you and one in your pet's emergency supply kit. Obtain 'Pets Inside' stickers and place them on your doors or windows, including information on the number and types of pets in your home, to alert firefighters and rescue workers. Consider putting a phone number on the sticker where you could be reached in an emergency. If time permits, remember to write the words 'Evacuated with Pets' across the stickers, should you flee with your pets.

STAY INFORMED! KNOW ABOUT TYPES OF EMERGENCIES.

Some of the things you can do to prepare for the unexpected, such as assembling an emergency supply kit for yourself, your family and your pets, is the same regardless of the type of emergency. However, it's important to stay informed about what might happen and know what types of emergencies are likely to affect your region as well as emergency plans that have been established by your national and local government.

Be prepared to adapt this information to your personal circumstances, and make every effort to follow instructions received from authorities on the scene. With these simple preparations, you can be ready for the unexpected. Those who take the time to prepare themselves and their pets will likely encounter less difficulty, stress, and worry. Take the time now to get yourself and your pet ready.

***Preparing for your pets makes sense.
Get ready now.***

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) (n.d.). Prepare for emergencies now: Information for pet owners [Global Edit]. Retrieved 28 July 2016 from <http://www.fema.gov>