

COUNSELOR CONNECTION

Dru Klein, Janet Goldstein & Jayna Dash

Harry Brown & Zachary Lopez (Intern)



Welcome to your last Counselor newsletter of the year! In this edition, we wanted to share some ideas to make the most of your summer. From family meetings, to ideas for things to do outside, to suggestions for how to help support your student with a technology detox....we are hopeful that this document gives you some positive ideas to come together as a family and decompress from this past school year. As always, we appreciate your partnership and ongoing collaboration. Together, we wish you all a wonderful, relaxing, FUN and healthy summer.

SUMMER WITH YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOLER

Here we are at the final week of the 21/22 school year. With the end of school comes time for our middle schoolers to relax, have more choices and increased family time. If you haven't tried using "Family Meetings" as a way to check, plan and discuss family concerns- now is the time!

These meetings are one of the most effective parenting tools at your disposal. The meetings create time to teach essential skills, active listening, problem solving, opportunities to discuss successes and a chance to discuss mistakes and turn those into learning experiences. This time together **must include time to plan fun activities, not just to problem solve, discipline or to sort out chores.**

10 Steps for Effective Family Meetings

(from the [Positive Discipline](#) website)

1. **Introduction** Explain the purpose of the meetings, to plan fun activities and be stronger as a family working together.
2. **Compliments or appreciations** Share the positives.
3. **Family meeting agenda.** "The agenda will be placed on the refrigerator so everyone can write down challenges, activities and ideas for the week.
4. **Talking Stick** "This item will be passed around to help everyone remember that only one person can talk at a time, and that every- one gets a turn."
5. **Brainstorming** "Brainstorming means thinking of as many solutions as we can. While brainstorming, all ideas are okay (even funny ideas) without discussion."
6. **Focus on Solutions** "Let's practice with the problem on the agenda."
7. **Encourage the kids to go first** If no one speaks up, you might need to get them started with some funny ideas and some practical ones by saying, "What about throwing dirty dishes in the garbage? What if each of us takes one day of the week?"
8. **Use the 3 R's and an H to assess proposed solutions** Encouraging solutions must be (1) related, (2) reasonable, (3) respectful, and (4) helpful.
9. **Choosing the solution** "Do we want to narrow the ideas down to one solution or try more than one? We can evaluate how the solution or solutions worked during our next meeting, in one week."
10. **Fun Activity** "We will take turns choosing an activity for the end of each family meeting. For tonight I've chosen charades. Who will volunteer to decide the fun activity for next week?"

Focus on setting a positive tone. To enhance your meetings, establish agreements such as: avoid interruptions, no put downs, everyone heard, be respectful and ensure everyone has a chance to contribute.

SUMMER TECHNOLOGY TIPS

Have you been struggling with managing the cell phone of your middle schooler? If so, you are not alone! We talk to parents often about how difficult they are finding the task of managing their tween/teen on their cell phones. Setting up expectations and rules around the phone is an important first step, but if you are feeling like you missed that opportunity, it's not too late. You can use the end of school/the beginning of summer as a time to revisit expectations and set some new parameters.

This [ARTICLE](#) gives parents some great pointers around cell phones Here's a summary of their recommendations:

Set Ground Rules: It's okay to have rules around when, how often, in what capacity and for how long kids can be on their phones. If you already forgot this step, push the reset button.

Give and Take: It's okay to negotiate that your kids can have screen time in exchange for reading or other important (non-screen) related activities.

Set the Time and Place: Create no phone zones or no phone times (like at the dinner table or at night when kids should be sleeping).

Reconnect: Spend time doing things as a family that don't involve the cell phones. This summer is the perfect time to set aside family time without technology.

Shut it Down: Make rules that the phones do not go to bed with your kids. They can use the old fashioned alarm clocks if need be. Sleep is important- especially for middle schoolers.

Get Real: It's important for adults to model good technology habits too. Show your kids that technology is just one of many sources of entertainment in your life too.

GET OUTSIDE

Reconnecting with nature this summer for at least 120 minutes a week is a great (and fun!) way for the whole family to enjoy the benefits of positive mental health according to recent research published in *Scientific Reports* (White et al., 2019). Both passive and active outdoor activities were correlated with positive mental health and wellbeing as long as time spent outdoors was at least 2 hours within the week.

Some activities to consider this summer are:

- Hiking
- Reading a good book outdoors
- Gardening
- Taking the family and/or pets out for a day at the park
- Camping
- Having a nice family barbecue or picnic
- Listening to an audiobook or podcast on a walk at your pace



This is such welcome news, as many families across the community and country have expressed a growing interest in reclaiming time away from screens and electronic devices. So if you and your family are looking for ways to reconnect this summer, scale back screen time a bit, and boost mental wellness while making new memories, the great outdoors is a great place to start!

SAVE THE DATE

Back 2 School Day is scheduled for Wednesday, August 24th, 2022