BUSY DOESN'T FIX

BOREDOM

SURPRISING IDEAS FOR MOMS THIS SUMMER

LIFETREE Family

LifetreeFamily.com

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About Lifetree Family

Lifetree Family is a faith-based parenting blog and resource site seeking to celebrate the voice of real parents who love Jesus and their kids. We understand firsthand that parenting is a tough job, and want to encourage moms like you with stories and resources loved by families just like yours.

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"Mommmmm! I'm

BORED!"

“Mommmmmm, I'm bored!”

You look at the calendar. It's June 12th.

Summer has officially been in session for like 3 hours and already the kids are bored.

You turn to Pinterest and pray that Jesus has divinely deposited all of his good parenting ideas onto someone's board.

Jackpot. Collectively 1 millionish boredom-busting ideas.

Enthusiastically you pin.

You add things to your calendar. You coordinate. Army Rangers pale in comparison to your strategies and tactics.

- Swim dates
- Craft activities
- Nature adventures
- *Melted crayon art*

Sure, it's a lot of work, but you consider the alternative...which eventually leads to visions of tiny people rioting in the streets.

Thus plans are made. Kids have fun. Everyone smiles.

Success!

one week later...

“Mommmmmm, I'm bored!”

It's June 20th.

You're no longer inspired.

You hate Pinterest and its’ overly zealous, unrealistic, romantic notions.

You **LOATHE** melted crayon art.

It's not even July yet.

Seriously. Not. Even. July.

Now What?

Summer boredom is no joke.

It’s the kind of thing that can drive a mom crazy. Nevermind bringing your kids into this world through blood, sweat and tears; when summer rolls around you are now expected to be Master Entertainer, Chauffer, Caterer, Tutor, and Event Coordinator.

Geez. So much for *vacation*.

Plus, if you let up for one minute, Game Over. The second the kids aren’t pleasantly diverted through some amusement or another, they’re whining on the sofa. The world is ending. There’s weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Sigh.

What's a mom to do?

When faced with this dilemma, moms have two options:

Option 1: create crammed activity schedules. It's an ideal diversion tactic but also takes a ton of effort. And carpooling. And money.

Option 2: reclaim your summer sanity and repeat this mantra: *Busy doesn't fix bored.*

Busy doesn't fix bored.
Busy doesn't fix bored.
Busy doesn't fix bored.

We repeated it for you.

Busy doesn't fix bored.

We know what it's like: that twitchy, itchy feeling you get when you hear your kids start to whine about boredom. It's like fingernails on a chalkboard. In a horror film.

Dear God, please make it stop.

Of course, like a lot of problems we tackle as parents, boredom keeps bad company; it comes in a pack with other less-than-desirable behaviors. We call these "boredom's misfit cousins," and they are:

1. Whining
2. Fighting
3. Idleness

Together they make for a formidable opponent on a hot summer day when the clock strikes the witching hour.

Again…kinda like in a horror film.

Our instinct to this quadruple harassment is to mobilize. Immediately we're texting friends or putting out pleas on Facebook, hoping other moms will hear the call:

"SOS! Need ideas for what to do, STAT!"

They helpfully reply back, and we keep feeding the beast of boredom.

Mom, stop feeding the beast.

Getting Down to the Root

The truth is that busy doesn't fix bored. Busy is a Band-Aid. It will placate boredom for awhile, but wears off about 20 minutes after the activity or event is over.

In order to fix bored, we have to get down to the root. The root of boredom isn't a scheduling problem; the root is not understanding how to take ownership of our time and energy to develop the gifts and talents God gave us.

Of course, taking ownership is admittedly a tall order for small people. We haven't met a lot of 7-year-olds who naturally do this well. But that's where we parents come in. It's our job to give our kids opportunities to *practice* taking ownership of their own time.

Let's get real for a second: sometimes it's just easier to own their time for them.

When we take ownership, we're also taking control. Control of the day, of the schedule, of the events. And in the midst of the unpredictability of parenting, a little control can feel really good.

It feels good, that is, until we're exhausted and our 10-year-old still has no ability to entertain herself.

Stealth and Subterfuge:

How to usurp boredom and its' misfit cousins

We've already talked about how confronting boredom with busyness is tempting but doesn't get to the root of the problem. You also can't attack boredom, or its' misfit cousins, head-on.

Your kids will set that coming a mile away.

And they'll beat you. Every time. Because they're tricky like that.

You know what we're talking about.

Here's what you do instead: you approach from behind. You've got to get sneakier than them.

Are you ready? Here's the strategy:

Super Sneaky Strategy = intentionally create opportunities for them to develop the opposite of boredom, whining, fighting, and idleness.

What do we mean?

First we have to take a look at what non-bored, non-whiny, non-fighting, and non-idle behavior looks like, *'cause those behaviors are our goal.*

We already touched on what the opposite of bored looks like. A person who isn't bored actively directs her time into activities that she enjoys, that develop her talents, and that help others. She's also really good at resourcefully using the things around her in creative ways, and has a sense of purpose and direction in her life.

The opposite of whining isn't hard to picture. This person is full of gratitude, and displays an enthusiasm for what lies in front of him. He's generally content with his circumstances, and shares his thankfulness freely.

The opposite of fighting looks like serving, seeing the needs around us, and helping out.

And the opposite of idleness looks like diligence, industriousness, perseverance, and finishing what we start.

Nifty Reference Chart

Here's a nifty chart for reference. You can cut it out and laminate it if you want. And/or tape it to your kids' foreheads. (Please, *please*, send us a picture if you do that.)

~~Bored~~	Directing our own time creatively, resourcefully, and with purpose
~~Whining~~	Exuding enthusiasm, gratitude, and contentment for what we've been given
~~Fighting~~	**Seeing the needs of others + a willingness to help them**
~~Idleness~~	Showing industriousness, diligence, and follow through with things we've been asked to do

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The Bible Tells Us So...

It's no coincidence that the "opposite" qualities from our nifty reference chart are also among God's favorite attributes.

How do we know they're his favorite? Because Jesus was really good at all of them, and asked us to follow his example.

And that's the real merit to this whole endeavor of raising our kids: giving them as many opportunities as possible to know, love, and follow Jesus. And through loving him, we hope to all become more like him.

That's the real secret to busting boredom--becoming like Jesus.

*That's the real secret to everything.**

*Note: it hasn't escaped our attention that you're not even halfway through this download and we've already given away the real secret to EVERYTHING.

We know--it's more than you bargained for. You can thank us later. Or, better yet, slight us entirely and thank Jesus. We won't mind.

Bible Verses We Love

Bible verses for directing our time creatively, resourcefully and with purpose:

Psalm 90:12: Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

2 Corinthians 9:8: And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

Bible verses for gratitude and contentment:

Ephesians 1:3: Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Bible verses for serving each other in love:

1 John 3:16: This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

Bible verses for being diligent:

Proverbs 10:4-5: The hand of the diligent makes rich. He who gathers in the summer is a wise son...

Romans 5:4: ...perserverance produces character, and character produces hope.

Your mission is to create opportunities that foster these “opposite” qualities. By doing so, you’ll be getting down to the very root of boredom and exterminating it. Like weed killer, only the organic, non-poisonous, nice kind.

(Okay, okay, so we know there is no such weed killer. Just play along with our metaphor, ‘kay? We aren’t scientists, here.)

But enough of the pep talk. Let’s get down to some actual boredom-busting!

How to Bust Boredom

(the for-real tactics, activities, and printables you need to get started)

First, a little helpful vocab:

Activities: a string of events, outings, and tasks that when done in moderation are wonderful and fun and neat for summer. Alternatively, energy-draining, money-sucking, frantic/hectic/manic stacks of events that leave moms worn to the bone trying to feed “the beast.”

Structure: a plan for organizing your days and weeks into blocks of intentionally themed times designed to bring out cool qualities in your kids and while also preserving sanity.

(Can you tell which one we like better?)

Tip: Planning a structured day is not the same as filling every day with activities. Yes, activities will happen. Yes, you will want to schedule them. But yes, you'll also have blocks of time when your kids will choose how to direct their own energy into activities they create.

This last part—where you leave your kids alone to create their own activities—works the best when you give them a little help. Namely,

Give them a general theme for the time period.
Example: This is play time! You can do whatever you want, including creating a game, going outside with the soccer ball, or drawing.

Give them a time limit. Kids like to know how long they have to do something, especially if they're not too keen on the idea at first.
Example: This is play time! You can do whatever you want for the next 45 minutes, including creating a game, going outside with a soccer ball, or drawing.

Ideas for Your Day

Here are some character-building themes to consider for your blocks of time, plus how they foster those stealthy, Jesus-like “opposite” qualities we talked about earlier. Each one of these themes gives kids a chance to explore the unique talents and gifts God gave them, and how to grow those gifts during the summertime.

Theme: Learning time
Remember how non-bored kids direct their time into the things they enjoy and give them purpose? Self-directed learning time is an excellent opportunity for them to explore both of these.

Theme: Play time
Non-bored kids are resourceful and creative, and nothing nurtures these two supreme qualities like playing. In fact, we’re so pumped about the virtues of playtime that we wish grown-ups played more often, too! Self-directed playing invites imagination, fun, and ingenuity.

Theme: Make and Create time
Related to play time, make and create time gives kids opportunities to do just what God did in Genesis: use their time to create something new.

Theme: Service time
Service is the opposite of fighting. When we are watching out for the needs of others (especially other siblings), we are far less likely to want to kick them in the shins or destroy their Lego tower. Plus service is one of THE VERY BEST WAYS to cultivate gratitude and thankfulness for how God has blessed us, and it's particularly good at developing compassion. Boom.

Theme: Relaxation/Rest time
Resting and relaxing is so important that even God himself rested for a day after creating the universe. Practicing relaxation teaches all of us (yeah—that's right--we're talking to you, too, mom-with-a-million-things-on-her-to-do-list) that we aren't saved by our works but by God's abundant grace.

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structured planning calender

Like what you'd find on Pinterest, only less intense

(You can color-code it if you want. We won't judge.)

	m	t	w	r	f
7	play time			play time	
8		make & create time	play time		service time
9					
10			make & create time	make & create time	
11	make & create time				play time
12		play time			
1			learning time		
2	learning time			play time	rest & relaxation time
3		play time			
4					
5		rest & relaxation time	play time		
6	play time				
7					
8					

This is what a sample week of structured planning could look like. Yours will look different. *And might have glitter.*

See the printables section for your blank copy.

stealth activity ideas

Some of these activities are mom-led, while others can be kid-led. For the kid-led ideas, consider putting printing them out and putting them in a jar. Kids can draw the activities out of the jar all summer.

See the printables section for activities to put into a jar.

Learning

Kids love to learn new things! Ask your kids what kinds of things they'd love to know more about, and help them discover more about it. Help them explore new things by going to the library and researching online to discover interesting facts. Then include a hands-on activity or adventure where they can experience more about the topic they learned.

Go on a weekly learning field trip! (Look for coupons or family passes.):

- Planetarium
- Zoo or Aquarium
- Museum
- Farm
- Art gallery
- Local historical site

Learning (cont.)

Explore interesting "out-of-the-box" educational outings:
• Local dump (great place see dump trucks/front loaders in action)
• Recycling center
• Wildlife/animal rehabilitation center
• Humane Society
• Pet store/reptile center (great for little kids and cheaper than the zoo! And you can touch the animals!)
• Visit a local fire station (call ahead)
• Go on a train ride
• Visit a community garden or large garden & nursery center
• Take a nature hike to study plants, animals, birds, insects, rocks/fossils
• Visit a pond or stream and hunt for turtles, frogs, lizards, spiders and snakes
• Take a tour of a local factory or business to learn how they do things

Look for free or cheap local kids' workshops:
• Home Depot kids' workshop
• Michael's Crafts kids' classes
• Local rec center

Home-based learning:
• Math fact sheets
• Foreign language flashcards
• Bible verse memorization
• Handwriting practice
• Host a spelling bee
• Learn 2 new vocabulary words each week and post on the refrigerator

Playing

Play is the universal language of children! Give them space and time and they WILL entertain themselves (without electronics or a pricey entertainment outing.) Here are dozens of ideas to either do together or encourage them to do with siblings and friends!

Helpful tips for successful play:

• **Be OK with chaos:** as long as it's not unsafe or destructive, allow kids to be loud and wild when they're letting loose.

• **The more, the merrier! Open up your home to others:** playdates and friendships with neighbors are a wonderful distraction for bored kids, and it adds important social development.

• **Stock up on cheap props and snacks:** Otter Pops (or homemade popsicles) and stovetop popcorn are inexpensive and easy summertime treats. Have some extra staples such as balls, hula hoops, and sidewalk chalk.

Playing (cont.)

There are so many ways to play the list would never end. Here are some ideas for family play times where you can celebrate summer and make memories together!

Family Fun Night Ideas: Set aside 1 evening a week for simply playing together as a family.

Do things together such as:

- Family bike ride
- Family hike
- Evening at the pool (bring your dinner there, especially if they have a poolside grill!)
- Ice cream outing
- Lawn games—cornhole, horseshoes, ladderball, croquet
- Board games
- Nerf Gun war (everyone plays!)
- Hide and seek
- Moonlight hike (older kids)
- Backyard camping (sleep in tents, make s'mores over a real fire)

Making and Creating

The sky is the limit when it comes to kids and creativity and imagination! Encourage creativity with a variety of kid-led activities. (This means you can join them if you want, or you can break out Facebook.)

Eat it:
• Bake bread—create different shapes with dough
• Create a new recipe for a smoothie or soup (write it down!) Use veggies and fruit picked from a local garden!
• Create and design a menu for dinner, then shop and help prepare and serve
• Make homemade ice-cream get creative with flavors and add-ins!
• Make popsicles with different kinds of fruit pieces and juice. Experiment!

Imagine & produce it:
• Create a play or puppet production
• Make a music or dance video
• Create a “how-to” video of something you’re good at and put it on YouTube
• Write and illustrate a kids’ storybook or mini-novel
• Create a family scrapbook with printed digital photos
• Create a new board game: design the board on foam core, create game pieces, cards, and game rules. TWIST: use a dollar-store outdoor tablecloth or contact paper on posterboard and markers, and instead of game pieces, freeze small toys or colored water in an ice cube tray. Play the game outside on a hot day and see who’s ice piece lasts longest!

Making and Creating (cont.)

Build it

• Design and build an outdoor fort. Clear space under a big spruce tree or bushes. Nail a dollar-store tablecloth to some trees as a roof!
• Build a sandbox (with help, obviously)
• Build a raised garden or container garden and plant seeds (ditto about the help)

Write & draw

• Write and illustrate a children's book
• Write a mini-chapter novel
• Write an "all about me" book
• Create a summer adventure journal and write/draw in it each week (or print digital photos from outings)
• Create a collage from old magazines
• Create a summer treasure box by decoupaging an old shoebox with paper and magazine scraps
• Write a letter to a grandparent and draw a picture. Send it in the mail
• Create and decorate postcards from blank 4 X 6 index cards and send to loved ones or soldiers.

Serving

Kids yearn to make a difference and help others. In addition to building responsibility with household chores, include service activities in your routines to foster compassion and a heart for serving others.

Helpful tips about kids and serving:
• Research age-appropriate opportunities with pastors of local churches, directors of nursing homes, and senior centers by asking what their needs are.
• Try to connect with a project where you will be helping an individual. Allowing kids to see the one-to-one impact and relational connection that occurs when helping others is important.
• Avoid doing the same service project over and over so it doesn't feel like tedious obligation (unless kids are loving it!).
• Serve with your kids, even if they are older. Your model of servanthood matters.
• Prepare for some discomfort or resistance from kids (and possibly the recipient). Reaching out is sometimes intimidating, and the reward is not always immediate.
• Don't offer rewards or bribes for doing service projects. Instead, cultivate a genuine servant-heart and a "this is what we do" attitude.
• Debrief after each service project and talk about it. Ask open-ended questions like:

1. "How do you think the person we served feels about what we did?"
2. "In what ways did we show Jesus' love to others?"
3. "What surprised you about doing this?"

Serving (cont.)

Service ideas for nursing homes/senior centers:

• Read Bible verses or poetry to residents

• Pick flowers from your garden and make mini-bouquets with dollar-store vases. Create hand-written cards that say “Jesus loves you” or simply write your favorite Bible verse. Deliver to residents.

• If kids are musical, consider creating a mini-recital, worship time, or dance for the residents

• Learn a classic hymn and serenade residents. (Chances are, they’ll sing right along with you!)

• Teach residents how to use technology such as their cell phone, Facetime/Skype, Youtube, Google, etc. (great for older kids and teenagers!)

• Ask a nursing home director if there is a resident with a unique skill your kids could learn (example: playing an instrument, painting, knitting, crocheting, etc.). Arrange for some visits for your kids to learn from them. (Be sure to bring your own supplies!)

Serving (cont.)

Service project ideas for individuals in need:
• Walk their dog (if they're mobile, walk with them)
• Bring them a meal
• Run an errand for them
• Plant flowers in their yard
• Fix something that's broken in their house (great for older kids)
• Do a minor home improvement project for them (great for whole family)

Service projects for local, national or global impact (for older kids):
• Collection Drive: Many local and national organizations collect gently worn shoes, clothing, toys, and canned goods for the needy, and can help you set up a collection drive campaign. Older kids can explore this idea and set a goal for collections, promote it, and round up the collections. For more information on organizations like this, check out http://soles4souls.org/sign-shoe-or-clothing-drive

Resting & Relaxing

Down-time is very important for kids and adults alike! In our crazy-busy world sometimes it means we have to schedule unscheduled time. Establish some daily down-times for kids and allow them to rest and relax. It helps them understand they don't need to be busy to be happy!

Downtime might be things like:

- Watch a movie or TV show
- Play a video game
- Read a book
- Write in a journal
- Take a nap
- Play with toys quietly in your room
- Tinker, putter, wander—anything that helps you relax and unwind

The
Game Is VIRTUAL.
The
VIRTUES Are Real.

You might not want your kids to grow up to be video game champions. But what if a video game could help them become a hero of a different kind? **Buddy Quest** takes kids on adventures that show biblical virtues in action ... and then helps them practice those qualities in **real life**. Plus it makes it easy for moms and dads to stay connected with their kids' progress. So you can be a super-parent while your child becomes a new kind of **superhero**.

BUDDY QUEST

Being Good. Doing Good.

120+ Characters • 30+ Virtues • Eternal Fun • Coming soon to your mobile device

printables

Stickers/Badges for Kids

m	t	w	r	f
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				

printable kid-led activities

- Visit a pond or stream and hunt for turtles, frogs, lizards, spiders, and snakes
- Finish a math fact sheet
- Go through foreign language flashcards
- Memorize a Bible verse
- Practice your handwriting
- Play a board game
- Learn 2 new vocabulary words
- Play hide and seek
- Go outside and play a lawn game
- Create a how-to video of something you're good at and put it on YouTube
- Create a play or puppet show
- Make a music or dance video
- Make a summer adventure journal
- Create a new board game
- Write and illustrate your own story
- Build a fort
- Play a board game
- Play a video game
- Make a collage using old magazines
- Read a book
- Play quietly in your room

~~BORED~~

DIRECTING OUR OWN TIME CREATIVELY, RESOURCEFULLY, AND WITH PURPOSE

~~WHINING~~

EXUDING ENTHUSIASM, GRATITUDE, AND CONTENTMENT FOR WHAT WE'VE BEEN GIVEN

~~Fighting~~

Seeing the needs of others + a willingness to help them

Idle~~ness~~

Showing industriousness, diligence, and follow through with things we've been asked to do

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Handy At-A-Glance List

Learning Time Ideas

- Go on a weekly learning field trip!
- Explore interesting "out of the box" educational outings
- Look for free or cheap local kid's workshops
- Try home-based learning

Play Time Ideas

Helpful tips for successful play:

- Be OK with chaos
- The more, the merrier
- Stock up on cheap props and snacks

Make & Create Time Ideas

- Eat it!
- Imagine and produce it!
- Build it!
- Write & Draw

Service Ideas

Helpful tips about kids and serving:

- Research needs from churches, nursing homes, and senior centers
- Help an individual
- Avoid doing the same thing over and over
- Prepare for discomfort

Rest & Relaxation Ideas

Watch a movie, read a book, RELAX.
(seriously, do you really need ideas for this one?)

Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Psalm 90:12

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.

1 John 3:16

AND GOD IS ABLE TO BLESS YOU ABUNDANTLY, SO THAT IN ALL THINGS AT ALL TIMES, HAVING ALL THAT YOU NEED, YOU WILL ABOUND IN EVERY GOOD WORK.

2 Corinthians 9:8

EPHESIANS 1:3

PRAISE BE TO THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHO HAS BLESSED US IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS WITH EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING IN CHRIST.

now go enjoy your summer

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