

**“Mom, I’m Bored”...The Lost Art Of Downtime**

*Originally Published: December 22, 2009*

I sat my two kids down at the kitchen counter last week. The two of them next to each other, facing me as I stood on the other side of the counter. (This is my usual position as designated waitress.)

"Family discussion time...." I told them.

They looked seriously at me. I back at them.

"I have called you both here today to discuss your upcoming winter break."

Silence.

Fear.

Huh?

What's Mom have up her sleeve now? their looks said....

"Your Dad and I have decided we aren't going to sign you up for any camps, programs or activities over the break."

Confused looks.

"Invite friends over. I cannot be driving all over the place because I will be working, but your friends are more than welcome."

They looked at each other. Puzzled.

"Watch TV, play on your computers..."

OK.....

"Read a book or ride your bikes."

Panic.....Exercise?! Reading?! (Why are we punished??)

"No plans, no activities and no homework. This will be a great chance for you both to just chill and have some downtime."

Silence....

"OK, now who has a question?"

Both hands shot up.

"Yes?" I ask my daughter.

"Mom, I don't want [name of her brother's friend] to come over."

"You have no say which friends of your brother come over."

Next?

My son's turn: "What if I want two friends over on the same day?"

Me: "That's fine."

"Any other questions?"

Silence.

Confusion.

**So here's the thing:** Back in the day, kids came home from school, played outside till dark, ate dinner, went to bed, rinse and repeat.

Today....not so much.

Most of the kids I know are over-scheduled, under-relaxed, rushed and literally all over the place.

Downtime is rare.

Not really part of the deal.

Not ever built in or considered.

They don't know what to do when they have nothing to do. I get the "Mom, I'm bored" ALL the time.

Downtime needs to be scheduled in or stumbled upon. It's always a pleasant surprise. But a nagging one. Because, after all, shouldn't we always be doing something or getting ready to do something?

Downtime means they aren't signed up for anything. Not on a team. Not part of the action.

Downtime also means that Moms (and Dads) aren't driving all over creation, frazzled yet pretending it's all good.

Downtime....it's sorely missed in my humble opinion.

I don't have a solution and I'm not interested in preaching.

I just know that I'm OK if my kids tell me they are bored over the next two weeks. I can't even fathom being bored. I don't even know what that means. But I am in the minority.

So as far as them telling me they are bored....not only am I OK with it, I'm hoping for it.