On Your Mind

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**Summer Theme**

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Dear Dr. Robinson,

 Oh, how I love summer time with our kids. At ages 6, 10, and 12, they are each so unique and full of energy. Summer camps, playing outside with their friends, family day trips and vacation. All in a glorious mix of fun and activity. However, the current coronavirus, covid-19 pandemic has turned all of our worlds upside down. With sheltering-in-place orders, we’ve all been on lockdown for months. The novelty wore off the first couple of days. How do I (we) get through the coming summer time with social distancing and limited activity? How do I address our kids’ stress, frustration, and disappointment?

Signed, At a Loss,

Dear At,

 Welcome to the current, new normal. And yet, it’s not at all comforting that we are all in this together. So, now is the time to unpack your conviction that we have no control over our circumstances. We do, however, have full control over our response and reaction to those circumstances.

 First, active listen your kids’ feelings. Help them know that you appreciate how the shutdown is impacting them. Acknowledging their frustration and disappointment will, in itself, lower their stress levels. Once they’ve gotten it all out, call a family meeting to brainstorm a list of things over which they have control and ideas of things you all *can* do individually and as a family to learn, explore, and have fun despite the circumstances. To make it engaging and fun, think outside the box. Remember, you folks have control over time and expense variables, as you jointly pick from the list. Also, while you may have work to do from home, make time for that, but not at the expense of being with your kids. Remind your kids to limit their individual gaming and social media time, to make time for you, as well. Remember, as we are constantly reminded, we are all in this together and we will get through this. I’m with you.

NOTE: In taking my own advice, here’s a list of fun, different, family activities that my family put together, as an example.

1. Take a night to set up and go camping in your back yard. Include all the fixin’s, like a camp fire, s’mores, and ghost stories.
2. Have tournaments on your WII or other gaming options.
3. Make face masks, assembly line style, to distribute to local hospitals and first responders.
4. Bake cookies.
5. Plan meals.
6. Face time friends and families.
7. Use Zoom, or other collective media, to group without grouping.
8. Set up family exercising together.
9. Set up a scavenger hunt in your home and/or yard.
10. Email or snail mail notes to friends and extended family, letting them know you are thinking about them.
11. Help with homeschooling.

Of course, all activities are subject to local ordinances. Don’t feel you have to fill up all the time. Create things to look forward to each day.