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What to do during April vacation?

It certainly is a dilemma. Okay, maybe it's only a dilemma if you're stuck in the chilly, gray north. A vacation is hardly a vacation when cloudy days and muddy yards make outside play uninviting at best. And a disaster waiting to happen to your carpets at worse. If you're one of the lucky ones, problem solved – you're soaking up the sun on a beach somewhere.

For those without the time, inclination or budget for a family trip to Disney World or the Bahamas, April vacation can be a challenge. Reminding the kids of the wonderful week of skiing, sledding and snowball fights you shared in February will not solve your current and very pressing problem. Like generations of children before them, they are battling a severe case of the April Vacation Boredom Blues. That's Boredom with a capital B stuck-in-the-house Blues.

So what do you do with a house full of bored kids for a week? Well, you could send them to Nana and Grandpa. How many times have your parents or in-laws told you how much they miss their grandchildren? They'll be delighted to entertain them ... at least for a day or two.

Whether you are a parent, grandparent, aunt or uncle, if you've got kids at home this vacation week, here are a few ideas to keep everyone busy and happy.

Hit the road. When the going gets rough, the tough take a field trip. Kindle your kids' interest in science with a trip to the planetarium or aquarium. Awaken the budding artist with a museum visit. If your children have an interest in history, take them to an antique house or village or the historical society. And don't forget a visit to the library.

When in doubt, choose a place which interests you. By sharing your love of music, art, history or science, you may find a kindred spirit.

Laugh 'til you cry or be inspired. Check the newspaper, web or video store for movies. Whether you take in the latest comedy or a classic bio-pic, a great movie will lift you out of the ho-hum and humdrum of another rainy afternoon. An ice cream afterwards is not a bad way to finish the adventure.

Do a good deed. And another. Simple acts of kindness work wonders on everybody's disposition on a dreary day. When we stayed with my grandparents, my sister Brenda and I frequently ran errands for Nana. She always shared her morning newspaper with the lady up the street. Off we went after breakfast to deliver the paper. Sometimes Nana added a pint of berries, a cup of chowder or a piece of pie. After delivering the paper and pie, we took at least a few minutes to chat with Nana's friend. And then a few minutes more to play with Brownie, her cocker spaniel.

There are many things your children can do to help others. From baking cookies for the neighbors to spending a morning sorting cans at a food bank, you needn't look far to find a deed in need of doing. The experience will be even better if you do it together.

Suddenly a dull and boring week is anything but.

Enjoy the vacation with your children or grandchildren and bon appétit!



Susan

Peanut-y Chocolate Chip Cookies

My mother moved to the local nursing home late last summer.

About once a month I do a baking demonstration and tasting for her and her pals. These cookies were given a big thumbs up by one and all! Enjoy!

Makes about 5 dozen cookies

2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
 1 teaspoon baking soda
 1 teaspoon salt
 1/2 cup butter, softened
 1/2 cup peanut butter
 3/4 cup granulated sugar
 3/4 cup packed brown sugar
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 2 large eggs
 12 ounces semi-sweet chocolate chips (try the minis)
 1 cup chopped peanuts



Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Put the flour, baking soda and salt in a bowl and whisk to combine.

Put the butter and sugars in a large bowl and beat with an electric mixer until creamy. Add the vanilla and beat to combine. Add the eggs one at a time and beat until smooth.

Gradually add the dry ingredients and beat until just combined.

Stir in the chocolate chips and peanuts.

Using a mini ice cream scoop or 2 spoons, drop the batter onto ungreased baking sheets.

Bake for about 10 minutes or until golden brown. Cool on the baking sheets for a few minutes before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely. Be sure to enjoy at least one while it is still warm.