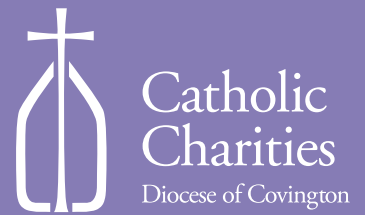


# Family Values

Great Ideas For Modern Parents | Summer 2015



## Unstructured Time Is Good For Children

Children today spend a lot of time year-round in structured activities other than school, including sports, tutoring, dance, gymnastics, etc. They have much less free time than earlier generations of children, and have access to many more activities than children had in the past. At the same time family life has changed, and more children live in families where there is no one home after school, so that afternoons are spent in day care or structured activities. Parents' work schedules are not a good match with school schedules, which means that even in summer, children are attending programs designed to keep them safe and busy and with adult supervision.

Children need unstructured time to balance their scheduled activities. That's when children process and assimilate what they have learned. Unstructured time is beneficial because it gives children the opportunity for simple planning and decision-making. Imaginative play with siblings or neighborhood children helps improve social skills, including the ability to negotiate and problem-solve. It also develops an important cognitive skill called "executive function." This is the ability to self-regulate, which includes the capacity to control emotions and resist impulses. These important skills are necessary for high-level functioning. Today's children have less opportunity to develop these skills than children of earlier generations, simply because they spend more time in structured activities supervised by adults.

It's helpful for children to learn to occupy themselves without access to television, video games, texting or the computer. All these diversions have a place, but part of becoming self-sufficient is the ability to tolerate their absence. Children can use their imagination

and ingenuity to entertain themselves, as many of today's parents remember from their own childhood. Here are a few ideas to help parents make sure that their children have some time to play, daydream, or even do nothing at all.

- Limit screen time—television, video games and computer time. Set a daily limit so that your child is not reliant on entertainment that is always provided.
- Choose toys that allow children to be creative. Toys that invite a variety of uses hold a child's interest for much longer and are played with more frequently.
- Send children outside to play. Children need to run around and use their large muscles. Studies have shown that children who get recess are more able to focus during class.
- Make time in the family schedule for unstructured time. For some families, for instance, Sunday is a special day to stay out of stores and restaurants, to avoid errands and projects around the house, and instead spend time together.
- Use the long homework-free summer evenings to relax and encourage outdoor play. Pickup ball games in the back yard with other kids teach skills that formal sports instruction does not emphasize, including the ability to solve problems, to negotiate, and to get along with others.
- When children say they are bored and have nothing to do, have faith that they will figure something out. Their play skills and ability to self regulate will improve with practice.

*Extend a hand. Change a life.*



Charity Community healing HOPE Education compassion

# Group Education and Support

To register for any program contact Client Care at 859.581.8974 Monday–Friday 9am–5pm.

## Family Wellness Classes

A lively, interactive curriculum that teaches parents the skills they need to raise their children successfully and builds on existing strengths. Each session teaches skills that can be used right away. This program is offered through Stronger Together, a partnership of the Northern Kentucky Community Action Commission and the Women's Crisis Center. No charge.

Parenting classes are ongoing starting every four weeks. Contact Client Care for the next available class.

## NeighborWorks

*Realizing the American Dream*

Homebuyer Education Class

*One Day Class from 9am to 5pm Can Help!*

Saturday, June 6

Saturday, July 11

Saturday, August 1

Saturday, September 12

Learn how to buy a home! Certified housing counselors will walk you through the process, answer questions, and give you the information you need to realize the dream of homeownership. Registration required, but class is free! Class meets from 9am to 5pm. Lunch is provided.

## Individual, Marriage and Family Counseling

Counseling addresses emotional and relationship issues which impair personal and social functioning, and includes work with individuals, couples and families.

## Parenting Talks and Workshops

A parenting educator is available to speak to your school or community group on a variety of topics. Call Mary Fleischman at 859.581.8974.

## Substance Abuse Treatment Services

Are you concerned about your teen's drug or alcohol use? Do you feel that you are fighting a losing battle? Catholic Charities provides counseling services for teenagers. We can assess for drug or alcohol problems, make recommendations, and work with your teen to make positive changes. We work with parents and teenagers who are struggling with the same issues that you are currently facing; you are not alone.

## Foreclosure/Mortgage Delinquency Counseling

Catholic Charities offers foreclosure counseling and mortgage delinquency counseling at no charge. Call for an appointment.

## Support Group

Is someone you love separated from you and your family because he or she is incarcerated? You are welcome to attend our support group to listen and share stories, and to express needs. Resource people will be available to consult as the need arises. The group meets on the third Tuesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at Catholic Charities. The group is free; no registration needed. For more information about our jail ministry program contact David Phillips at 859.581.8974 or [dphillips@covingtoncharities.org](mailto:dphillips@covingtoncharities.org).



**Catholic  
Charities**  
Diocese of Covington

3629 Church Street, Covington, KY 41015  
Phone 859.581.8974 | Fax 859.581.9595  
[www.covingtoncharities.org](http://www.covingtoncharities.org)

