

Embracing Spring Rain: Strategies to Get Kids Outdoors

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For my 40th birthday, I was surprised with a trip to Vancouver. As I packed my bags, I was told to bring rain gear—there was no way my family was going to let me stay inside just because of a little rain. I was there to explore, not to hide indoors. The same is true for kids in the spring. Just because it's rainy or chilly doesn't mean outdoor play has to stop!

Everyone needs outdoor time, no matter the forecast. In



many schools, rainy days mean canceled recess, and that lack of movement can lead to restlessness and frustration. Getting outside, even in less-than-ideal weather, helps with attention, sensory processing, and emotional

regulation.

The truth is, outdoor play is just as important in spring as in any other season. Movement helps kids regulate their bodies, develop motor skills, and improve focus. Plus, time spent in nature is proven to reduce stress and boost mood.

Why Outdoor Play Matters in the Spring

Supports Physical Health

Jumping in puddles, running through wet grass, and climbing damp playground equipment all help kids build strength, balance, and coordination. Exposure to natural light helps regulate sleep cycles and provides a much-needed vitamin D boost after winter.

Helps with Emotional Regulation

Many children, especially those with ADHD, sensory processing challenges, or anxiety, benefit from movement. Physical activity releases dopamine and serotonin, the brain's "feel-good" chemicals, which can help kids feel calmer and more focused.

Reduces Screen Time

With unpredictable spring weather, it's tempting to stay indoors with screens. While technology has its place, too much screen time can lead to increased irritability, poor sleep, and reduced physical activity. Getting outside—even in the rain—provides a much-needed break.

Encourages Creativity and Problem-

Solving

Rain and mud offer new ways to play—from making mud pies to floating homemade boats in puddles. Outdoor play challenges kids to think creatively, explore textures, and engage in unstructured, imaginative activities.

Strategies to Get Outside and Enjoy Rainy Spring Days

Dress for Success: Waterproof Layers are Key

The biggest barrier to outdoor play in the rain is often being wet and cold. The right clothing makes all the difference. Use a layering strategy to stay dry and warm:

Base layer: Moisture-wicking materials like wool or synthetic fabrics to keep skin dry

Middle layer: Fleece or a lightweight sweater for warmth

Outer layer: A waterproof, wind-resistant raincoat and rain pants

Accessories: Waterproof boots, rain gloves, and a hat with a brim to keep raindrops out of eyes

Make Outdoor Time a Game

If kids are reluctant to go outside, turn it into an adventure. Fun spring outdoor activities:

Puddle Jumping Contest: See who can make the biggest splash.

Rainy Day Scavenger Hunt: Look for worms, raindrops on leaves, or reflections in puddles.

Floating Boat Race: Make small boats from leaves, bark, or paper and race them down a stream or puddle.

Mud Kitchen Play: Let kids mix mud, sticks, and leaves to create “recipes.”

Create a Routine for Outdoor Play

When outdoor time becomes a daily habit, kids adjust to it—even in the rain. Ways to build a routine:

Morning Movement: A short walk before school can help wake up the brain.

After-School Play: Instead of heading straight for screens, spend 20–30 minutes outside first.

Weekend Adventures: Plan a family outing to a park, even if the weather is damp.

Find Rain-Friendly Destinations

Sometimes a change of scenery makes all the difference. Great places to visit in the rain:

Nature trails: Many parks remain accessible and offer beautiful rainy-day scenery.

Creeks and streams: Spring rain fills creeks and is perfect for floating sticks and boats.

Botanical gardens: Some have covered areas for rainy-

day exploring.

Outdoor markets: Farmers' markets still run in light rain, and kids can help pick out seasonal produce.

Get Involved in Spring Sports

If your child struggles with free play, structured activities may help. Popular rainy-day outdoor activities:

Soccer: Wet grass makes for fun sliding kicks.

Hiking: Trails are peaceful after a rain shower, and the smells of wet earth and blooming flowers can be soothing.

Cycling: A light drizzle won't stop the fun, and kids love riding through puddles.

Fishing: Rainy days often mean better fishing conditions.

Use Sensory-Friendly Strategies

Some kids, especially those with sensory sensitivities, find rain overwhelming. The feel of wet clothes, the sound of raindrops, and the smell of damp earth can lead to sensory overload. Ways to help include:

Let kids play with water indoors first (e.g., with a water table or sink play) before venturing outside. Choose soft, tagless clothing to prevent irritation. Offer waterproof gloves for kids who dislike the feel of wet hands.

Use noise-canceling headphones for kids sensitive to the sound of rain.

Incorporate Warm-Up Breaks

Cold, wet play doesn't have to mean staying outside for hours. Make sure kids stay comfortable. Ideas for warm-up breaks:

Drink hot cocoa or warm tea inside after playing. Set a timer for 20-30 minutes outside, then take a short indoor break.

Create a "warm-up station" with blankets and cozy socks.

Make It a Family Activity

Kids are more likely to embrace rainy-day play if parents participate. Ways to make it fun for the whole family:

Plan a rainy-day nature walk and listen for different sounds of water.

Take turns choosing outdoor activities for each outing.

Start a spring tradition, like an annual "Puddle Walk."

Bringing the Outdoors Inside. On days when it's just too stormy to go out, bring nature inside. Indoor nature activities include:

Rain Painting: Let raindrops mix with watercolor

paints on paper.

Indoor Planting: Start a small herb garden in pots near a window.

Sensory Bins: Fill a bin with damp soil, rocks, or pinecones for a nature-inspired sensory experience.

Spring rain doesn't have to mean staying inside! With the right gear, creative activities, and a bit of planning, kids can enjoy fresh air, movement, and outdoor fun—even on drizzly days. By embracing outdoor play, you can set an example, help kids build resilience, burn energy, and develop a love for nature in all seasons.

What Should Parents Know About AI?



What Should Parents Know About AI?

As a product of the 80s and 90s, I grew up with a bit of uneasiness with the idea of AI. It seems like a cool idea, to have robots and machines do all of our undesirable tasks. But movies like *Terminator* drop a

bit of fear of a robot takeover into the back of my mind. The list doesn't stop with Arnold, the killer robot: *The Matrix*, *I, Robot*, *Bicentennial Man*, *Short Circuit*, *Wall-E*. They are all movies about how robots take over in some way, shape, or form. It always seemed far-fetched or like a fantasy from a world too far in the future to become my reality.

Should We Limit the Use of AI for Kids?

But here we are. AI is quickly becoming a pivotal part of the work we do and how we interact with the world every day. AI in education is a hot topic of conversation. Many educators fear the use of AI and want to determine how we can stop students from utilizing the technology to cheat on their assignments. Of course, we want to make sure students can read, write, and think critically on their own; but is halting the use of AI all together the answer?

I would say no. As a rapidly expanding technology, AI will continue to become more and more a part of our everyday lives and it is already a tool people use to help ease their workload and to make themselves more productive. As a school principal, I use AI to generate draft emails, write letters to my school community, generate social media campaign ideas for my staff, and to generate feedback that I can use as seed ideas to share with my staff when I observe their classes. Of course, I have the knowledge and experience to review the content AI creates for me, so I can use it as an effective tool instead of a way to cheat my way out of

responsibilities. And yes, students will inevitably use this technology to cheat. However, it is important for parents and educators to embrace this new technology, so we can teach our students powerful, useful, helpful, and ethical ways to use it.

How Can Children Use AI Safely?

As parents, you are your child's guide to navigating the world. Take the opportunity early on to think about how your child can use AI in a meaningful way. Without you, they are likely to find all the negative ways to use AI on their own. With you by their side, they will learn to use a cutting-edge technology to help them on their pathway to productivity and success.

Where Do We Get Started?

As parents, you are your child's guide to navigating the world. Take the opportunity early on to think about how your child can use AI in a meaningful way. Without you, they are likely to find all the negative ways to use AI on their own. With you by their side, they will learn to use a cutting-edge tool to help them learn, grow, and succeed. Here are some ways to get started using AI at home to show your child that it is nothing to be feared and how to use it effectively:

Use ChatGPT to suggest a weekend itinerary, help generate ideas for a holiday celebration, and create a family meal plan for the week.

Use AI tools to generate ideas for fun videos you can post on social media with your kids (you can also use

this as an opportunity to teach your kids about Internet safety).

Take a course together from an online platform like Coursiv. This way you can discuss what you are learning about AI together.

Try learning some skills together using AI, including graphic design with Canva, or essay revision with Gemini.

No matter how you get started, just be sure to bring your kids along with you. Don't be afraid to learn together, and you'll be amazed how far they go!

Strategies to Help Your Child Love School Again (Part 2)



Strategies to Help Your Child Love School Again (Part 2)

My previous blog post on Why Your Child Hates School

explains reasons for a student's frustrations with school and how parents can support their struggling child. Here are solutions to Help Your Child Love School Again:

Advocate for Your Child

Your child needs you to be their voice, especially when they feel unheard or misunderstood. Work closely with teachers, counselors, and administrators to ensure they receive the support they need.

Request meetings if you notice ongoing struggles.

Ask about support services such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, or counseling.

Work with the school to develop an IEP or 504 Plan if your child qualifies for accommodations.

Focus on Strengths and Interests

Every child has strengths and interests that can help them reconnect with learning.

Find ways to incorporate their passions into their education.

Encourage them to join clubs, extracurricular activities, or special programs that align with their interests.

Praise effort and progress rather than just grades.

Create a Safe Space at Home

Home should be a place of comfort and safety where your child can decompress.

Provide opportunities for downtime and relaxation after school.

Encourage open conversations where your child feels safe sharing their feelings.

Validate their emotions—"I hear that school is tough for you right now. Let's work together to make it better."

Teach Self-Advocacy Skills

Empower your child to express their needs and seek support when necessary.

Teach them how to ask for help from a teacher.

Encourage them to recognize what strategies work best for them (e.g., using fidgets, taking breaks).

Help them practice self-regulation and coping skills.

Normalize Differences and Challenges

Whether your child is neurotypical or neurodivergent, they need to know that struggles with school do not define them.

Teach them that everyone has strengths and challenges.

Encourage a growth mindset—challenges help us grow and learn.

Remind them that their worth is not tied to grades or performance.

Final Thoughts: Turning Struggle into Success

If your child hates school, it's important to listen, validate, and take action. There is no one-size-fits-all solution, but by identifying the root cause and implementing targeted strategies, you can help your child feel more confident, supported, and engaged in their education.

Remember, school should not be a place of dread—it should be a place of discovery. With the right support, advocacy, and encouragement, your child can rediscover their love for learning.

If you have concerns about your child's school experience, reach out to their teachers, special education team, or school counselors. You are not alone in this journey, and together, we can make school a place where all children feel seen, heard, and valued.

Why Your Child Hates School (Part 1)



Why Your Child Hates School (Part 1)

As a special education teacher, I've worked with students across the spectrum—both neurotypical and neurodivergent—who struggle with school. I see the frustration on their faces, the reluctance in their steps, and the exhaustion in their voices when they tell their parents, "I hate school."

If your child has ever said these words, you're not alone. Many parents hear this, and their immediate reaction is concern, frustration, or helplessness. Why does your child feel this way? Is it something specific, or is it just a phase? And most importantly—what can you do about it?

Why Kids Hate School: The Common

Reasons

It's Too Hard (or Too Easy)

For many students, schoolwork is either too challenging or not challenging enough.

A child who struggles academically may feel frustrated and defeated, dreading school because it reminds them of their difficulties.

A child who finds the work too easy may feel bored and disengaged, leading to a lack of motivation and even behavior issues.

For Neurodivergent Students: Many neurodivergent students, especially those with learning disabilities, ADHD, or autism, may struggle with processing speed, working memory, or attention, making learning feel overwhelming. Others, particularly gifted students, may feel unchallenged and unmotivated.

What Parents Can Do:

If your child finds school too difficult, work with their teacher to explore accommodations, interventions, or additional support. A 504 Plan or IEP (Individualized Education Plan) may be necessary. If your child is bored, speak with the school about enrichment opportunities, acceleration, or more challenging assignments.

Provide opportunities at home for problem-solving, creativity, and hands-on learning to keep their mind

engaged.

Social Struggles and Peer Relationships

Friendships and social dynamics play a huge role in a child's experience at school. If your child is struggling socially, school can feel like an emotionally exhausting place.

They may feel lonely or left out.

They may experience bullying or exclusion.

They may have trouble understanding social cues or forming friendships.

For Neurodivergent Students: Many neurodivergent children struggle with social communication and may find it difficult to navigate friendships. Sensory sensitivities, misunderstandings, or rigid thinking patterns can also make social interactions stressful.

What Parents Can Do:

Encourage social skills practice through role-playing, books, or structured social activities.

Reach out to teachers or school counselors for support in fostering positive peer interactions.

Connect your child with clubs, hobbies, or activities where they can meet like-minded peers.

Sensory Overload and Anxiety

For some children, especially those with sensory processing differences or anxiety, the school environment itself can be overwhelming.

Bright lights, loud noises, crowded hallways, and strong smells can make school an overstimulating place.

Unstructured times like recess, lunch, and transitions can be particularly challenging.

Anxiety about grades, expectations, or social interactions can make school feel unsafe.

For Neurodivergent Students: Sensory sensitivities are common among autistic students, students with ADHD, and those with sensory processing disorder. A child may become dysregulated or shut down due to overwhelming stimuli.

What Parents Can Do:

Work with the school to implement sensory-friendly strategies such as noise-canceling headphones, fidget tools, or a quiet space for breaks.

Teach self-regulation strategies like deep breathing, grounding techniques, or movement breaks.

Talk with the teacher about creating a predictable routine to reduce anxiety.

Lack of Connection to Teachers or School Staff

Children need to feel connected to at least one caring adult at school. If they feel unseen, misunderstood, or unsupported, school can become a place of disconnection rather than belonging.

For Neurodivergent Students: Some neurodivergent students struggle with feeling misunderstood by their teachers. They may need alternative communication methods or additional patience from staff.

What Parents Can Do:

- Communicate with teachers about your child's needs, interests, and strengths to build a positive relationship.

- Encourage your child to find a trusted adult at school, whether it's a teacher, counselor, or support staff member.

- If possible, request a mentor or check-in system to provide additional emotional support.

Homework Battles and Academic Pressure

Many children feel overwhelmed by the amount of homework or pressure to perform well in school. This can create stress and lead to avoidance behaviors.

For Neurodivergent Students: Homework can be especially difficult for students with executive functioning challenges, making it hard to initiate, organize, or complete tasks independently.

What Parents Can Do:

Set up a consistent, distraction-free homework routine with built-in breaks.

Focus on effort rather than perfection, and advocate for modified assignments if needed.

Teach executive functioning strategies such as checklists, timers, and visual schedules.

Strategies to Help Your Child Love School Again

Now that we've explored why school may be a struggle, let's focus on solutions.

Advocate for Your Child

Your child needs you to be their voice, especially when they feel unheard or misunderstood. Work closely with teachers, counselors, and administrators to ensure they receive the support they need.

Request meetings if you notice ongoing struggles.

Ask about support services such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, or counseling.

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If you have concerns about your child's school experience, reach out to their teachers, special education team, or school counselors. You are not alone in this journey, and together, we can make school a place where all children feel seen, heard, and valued.

My next blog post will focus on strategies to help your child love school again.

How to Get Involved in Your Kid's School



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In the modern age of communication, schools inundate parents with messages about schedules, coffee with the principal, upcoming events, and opportunities to participate in training. Like most parents I have spoken to, I often save those emails and texts for later, hoping that “future me” will be able to find a way to participate more meaningfully. In most schools, a small percentage of parents are highly involved, a few more come to monthly events and meetings, and the majority only come to major events like Back to School Night and Parent Conferences. I am one of the “Monthly Event” parents, and my wife and I are constantly trying to determine how we can get more engaged.

But some would ask, “Why bother?” If I go to the big events, I support my child by helping with homework. I

provide meaningful learning opportunities at home. I also make sure my child attends school. Why do I have to take time to go to campus? This is an especially pertinent question given that many schools only offer engagement opportunities between 8 AM and 5 PM. This means parents have to leave work early or take time off to come to the school to support.

What Our Kids Observe

The answer is in the perception of the child. Our involvement at our child's school reinforces the value and importance of education. It solidifies the child's understanding that the adults in their life are working together to make sure the child gets the best education possible. It also helps to build relationships and understanding between teachers, staff, and parents making it easier for that team to collaborate and more difficult for the child to play adults against each other. When school adults and home adults are working in partnership to provide a great educational experience, the student will take his or her education more seriously and the adults will be able to better meet the needs of the student.

Strategies to Get Involved

So how can you get involved? Here are some tips for getting engaged in a way that is meaningful to you:

If you are the parent of a child with special needs or the parent of an English Learner (EL), inquire about the opportunities your school has for you.

Schools are required to have a School Advisory Council that includes parents as members, and they have to have an EL Parent Advisory Council. These meetings are led by the school principal and attended by a variety of stakeholders, including parents! Also, if your child has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), you should attend and engage in your child's IEP meeting! Often parents think the educators know best, and they do have a lot of strategies that are great for your child. But so do you! You know your child best and you can offer a lot that would help them succeed.

Most schools are looking for volunteers to help with field trips or fundraisers, and many schools would love to have some more adults around to help with supervision. Ask your school's administration how you can sign up to be a parent volunteer.

Bring fruit or water to your school's sporting events. Of course, make sure you check in with the coach or athletic director first. The kids will love to have some orange slices or snacks after the game. This could make you the football hero mom/dad!

When you see a need, offer your help! Instead of just bringing concerns forward, jump in like a partner. If you see traffic is crazy during drop-off, ask if you can be trained to help direct traffic a couple of days per week. If you see that the kids look bored during recess, offer to bring in arts and crafts the kids could do in the lunch area. If your kid's teachers seem tired, bring them some coffee and donuts!

No matter how you get involved, think of a way that fits

for you and just jump in. When you do, talk to your child about what you are doing and how you are engaging at the school. This should lead to more conversations with your child and a lasting impression of the importance of their education.