



MG Play Therapy
Maria Guerrero, BA Hons, PG Cert, PG Dip
Play and Creative Arts Therapist
PTUK Membership Number: 202104659
maria@mgplaytherapy.co.uk

Supporting Your Child During the Summer Holidays

The summer holidays can be a wonderful opportunity to spend more time together as a family. They can also bring challenges, especially when routines change and everyone is spending more time at home.

For some families, the holidays are full of adventures and days out. For others, they involve juggling work, childcare and trying to keep everyone happy. However, your summer looks, that's okay.

Every child is unique. What works well for one child may not work for another, so trust yourself to adapt these ideas to suit your own family.

These aren't meant to be another list of things to tick off. They're simply a few thoughts that, in my experience, can help create moments of connection during the holidays. Sometimes it's those small, ordinary moments that children remember most.

Spend a little uninterrupted time together each day

If you can, try to set aside just **15–30 minutes** each day where your child has your full attention.

Let them choose what you'd do together. It might be building Lego, drawing, kicking a football, baking, making up stories or simply chatting.

During that time, put the phones away if you can, forget about the jobs that need doing and allow yourself to simply be with them.

You don't need to teach, correct or entertain. **Just being present is enough.**

Keep some predictability

Many children seem to feel more settled when they know roughly what the day might look like. It doesn't have to be a strict timetable. Sometimes talking through the day over breakfast or drawing a simple plan together is enough.

A little predictability can help children feel safe, particularly when the usual school routine has changed.

If you're juggling work and family life

For many parents, the summer holidays don't mean six weeks off. They mean trying to balance work, childcare and everything else that life brings. If that's your reality, please don't put pressure on yourself to create the "perfect" summer.

Children don't need constant entertainment. Sharing breakfast together, reading a story before bed, having a cuddle on the sofa or playing a quick game after dinner can mean far more than a day full of activities.

If your child is spending time with grandparents, family members, holiday clubs or childminders, keeping a few familiar routines or comfort objects can sometimes help them feel more settled.



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Behaviour is communication

Sometimes, when children are struggling, they're trying to tell us something rather than simply giving us a hard time.

When things feel difficult, it can help to pause and ask yourself: *"I wonder what my child might need right now?"*

You may not always know the answer, and that's okay. Simply approaching your child with curiosity rather than frustration can make a real difference.

Move, rest and slow down

Many children seem to find it easier to regulate after they've had a chance to move their bodies. A walk, a bike ride, dancing in the kitchen, playing in the park or simply running around the garden can all help.

At the same time, don't feel you have to keep every day busy. Some children need the holidays to slow down after a busy school year. It's okay to have quiet days. It's okay if your child spends time with their favourite interests. It's okay if they're bored sometimes, too. Boredom often creates space for imagination, creativity and independent play.

Follow their interests

Whatever your child enjoys, whether it's dinosaurs, Minecraft, trains, football, drawing or collecting facts, joining them in their world is one of the loveliest ways to build connection.

You don't have to become an expert. Simply being interested is often enough.

Help children know what to expect

If you're planning a trip or going somewhere new, it can help to talk about it beforehand, look at a few photos together or explain what the day might look like. Knowing what to expect can reduce uncertainty.

Some children also enjoy having a quiet space to come back to at home - a cosy corner with cushions, books, colouring or favourite comfort objects where they can simply recharge.

Be kind to yourself... and to your child

Try to notice the little things.

- *"I saw how hard you kept trying."*
- *"That was really kind."*
- *"You didn't give up."*



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Those moments matter, and when things don't go to plan, remember that every family has difficult days. Children don't need perfect parents. They need parents who can come back afterwards and say:

- *"That was hard for both of us."*
- *"I'm sorry."*
- *"Shall we start again?"*

Those moments teach children that relationships can recover after difficult times.

Create little family rituals

The moments children often remember aren't necessarily the biggest ones.

- A bedtime story.
- Friday film night.
- Saturday morning pancakes.
- An evening walk.
- Ice cream after swimming.

Simple traditions like these help children feel connected and give them something to look forward to.

A final thought

At the end of the summer, your child probably won't remember every activity you did together.

What they're much more likely to remember is how they felt.

- Feeling safe.
- Feeling accepted.
- Feeling listened to.
- Feeling loved.

Those moments of connection are often found in the simplest parts of the day.

I hope you and your family have a summer filled with laughter, connection and lots of ordinary moments that become special memories. Try not to put too much pressure on yourself this summer. Your relationship with your child is far more important than creating the perfect holiday.

With best wishes,

Maria Guerrero
PTUK Certified Play Therapist