

Laugh, Bond, Make Lasting Memories

7 SIMPLE WAYS TO RECONNECT WITH YOUR KIDS THIS SUMMER



7 SIMPLE WAYS TO RECONNECT

You're not alone if you find the school holidays run something like this:

Before: "Yay! I'm going to fill the days with crafting, baking, and laughter. We'll have a blast!"

During: "Wah! We're living on a diet of chips and movies, and communicating via grunts. I'm counting down the days till school starts."



Why do our high hopes come crashing down?

We get derailed so quickly for two reasons:

1: It may not look like it but our kids are exhausted after these tough times.

2: We're easily triggered.



In this guide, Hand in Hand instructor [Rachel Schofield](#) will show you five ways you can overcome these hurdles. If you are:

- **Melting down about the meltdown, whining and off-track behavior**
- **Struggling to juggle the change of routine, whether you are at work, working around them or staying home**
- **Ready to reset your vacation time to boost fun times and make good memories**

By the end of this guide, you'll be way more on-track to the good days you want - close, connected, and fun.

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1

TURN CRANKINESS INTO CONTENTMENT

IN JUST 5 MINUTES A DAY

Is all kinds of everything going wrong for your kid?

- Can't settle.
- Gets bored.
- Picks at siblings.
- Is grumpy and irritable.
- Nothing you suggest sounds like a good plan for the day...

Kids say they can't wait for the holidays, and then hate it!

"Our kids are exhausted," says Hand in Hand Instructor, Rachel Schofield. This year, they've gone from a normal school routine which can be challenging enough, add to that homeschool, distancing, missing family, teachers, friends and activities. "They're filled to the brim with feelings that tumble out in cranky, difficult behaviour."

ARE YOU
PREPARED FOR
MORE CHANGE
THAN YOU
THOUGHT?

"Their tired cranky behaviour is actually a cry for help. If you reach in and connect you'll see them relax," says Rachel.

Here's how you do that:

1. **Plan when you can spend 5-10 minutes** (or more) with your child and no distractions.
2. **Tell your child when that time will be.**
3. **At that time set a timer.** Tell them they can do whatever they'd like until the timer dings.
4. **Follow their direction.** Don't get distracted. Don't direct their play. If they want you to be a ninja and fight? Let's go sensei! If they want you to shampoo every doll in the house for that time, power up the shower! One-on-one time like this works best if you can say yes to all their requests (bar anything that's a safety hazard or costs millions of dollars. Buy 10 computer games online? Try again...).
5. **When the timer rings,** tell them what a great time you had, and that you can't wait to play tomorrow.



**WE CALL THIS TOOL SPECIAL TIME.
IT WORKS WITH YOUR CHILD'S BRAIN
TO REBALANCE AND RESTORE
CONNECTION.**

**BUT WHAT IF MY CHILD
LOSES IT WHEN THE TIMER
DINGS?**

Actually, that's progress.

Tears are another way for them to clear school fallout...more about that on idea 4.

Until then, schedule Special Time when you have time to spend afterwards. If they cry, stay close and tell them you get it.

You don't need to fix anything. This process is progress.

DO IT NOW

- Pull out wherever you like to schedule important stuff and slot in a daily Special Time session.

2

BREAK THE RULES!

PLAY AROUND WITH POWER

"Write this email by 5 o'clock."

"Don't forget to buy cheese."

"Make sure dad's birthday card is on the mail."

Arrrgh! **No-one** likes spending large chunks of their time doing what others tell them to.

This year, your kids have dealt with lots of change, pressure and uncertainty. And a whole new set of rules: checking on zoom calls, doing assignments, and having to be flexible in completely unexpected ways.



**YOUR KIDS
WILL DELIGHT
AT BEING IN
CHARGE FOR
ONCE!**

SWITCH SIDES TO GET ON THE SAME SIDE

"Games where your child is in charge helps them to feel in charge of their lives," says Rachel. "They get to enjoy having the upper hand for a while which is a welcome antidote to school."

Laughter shifts tension, and puts you all on the same page. Your kids will delight at being in charge for once!

STUCK FOR GAME IDEAS? HERE'S TWO TO TRY TODAY

1. Silly Rules

You could create some silly rule like, "No-one's allowed to sit on my chair." Deliver your rule with a twinkle in your eye. And when they sit on your chair, goofily get upset so they get to laugh and laugh.

2. Play School

One for younger kids is playing 'school' where they are the teacher and you do what they tell you to. Be clumsy or incompetent and follow the giggles.

**THROW OUT STANDARD RULES:
IT HELPS TO THROW OUT THE RULES TO COMMON
GAMES AND GO WITH WHATEVER MAKES YOUR
CHILD LAUGH INSTEAD. IS IT BEING CAUGHT IN HIDE
AND GO SEEK, OR JUMPING OUT ON YOU? SNAKES
AND LADDERS WHERE YOU ALWAYS SEEM TO GO
DOWN THE LADDER BECAUSE THEY TELL YOU TO?
ROLL WITH IT..**

DO IT NOW

Decide when you can fit games into your day.

Just after breakfast? Get laughter going early.

Following afternoon nap? After a snack?

Just before dinner to work up an appetite (and a healthy dose of good feeling?)

Right after dinner? A bit of play here can help the nighttime routine go faster.

Before bed in pjs? This can be a fun time to have all the family involved. Once everyone is tired out you can all flop onto the bed for story time.

3

GET ROUGH AND READY

STOP BATTLES BY BATTLING!

Vacation is all about running free. Hose fights. Making mudpies. Right?

So how come all yours want to do is fight over the remote control and ask for 500 snacks?

Sometimes kids feelings get tangled up inside their bodies and the energy gets mis-directed. It's like they move into shutdown.

That's when the whining starts. When they call each other names, or hide each other's toys and end up fighting.

Or ask for the 500th snack!

Guess how you turn it around?

ROUGHHOUSING IS GREAT FOR BUILDING CONFIDENCE

Get physical.

Get playful.

Get in close contact.

Burn off that excess energy.

This kind of physical play builds connection, and your kids get to offload light fears through laughter. Experts say that roughhousing is great for building confidence too.

This kind of rough and tumble play is also a great strategy for re-directing kids power battles against each other. Ask them to team up and tackle you!



ROUGH AND TUMBLE CHECKLIST

NEED PLAY IDEAS? WE GOT YOU! CHECK THESE OFF AS YOU PLAY AND SEE WHICH YOUR KIDS LIKE BEST.

Pillow fight. Set those feathers flying.

Horsey rides. Giddy up kids!

Wrestling. I sure hope no one tries to push me off this carpet!

Pool noodle jostle. Use noodles to sword fight.

Nerf gun battle. Don your protective headgear!

Chase. However you love to play it.

Kiss chase. The reward is kisses all over from you. Ew! (they'll say!)

Airplanes. The ones where you lay on the floor with your legs up and your child balances with their arms out like a plane.

Space Booster Throw. Like airplanes, except you use your legs to boost them onto cushions or a trampoline.

Water fight. A summer vacation must-do.

Snowball fight. Use indoor balls or bunched up socks if you don't have, y'know, real snow.

Sock grab. Throw down a dare to get both socks off the feet of your opponent. Extra points if they're stinky!

Sheet Slides. Use a sofa throw or sheets and pull your kids across the floor. Bonus points to you if you swish them off. Bonus points to them if you can't!

Swing-arounds. Hold your child under the arms and swing in circles or from side to side.

Bed Spread. Your challenge is to remain on the bed as your kids push you off.

What's the time Mr. Wolf? Suspense followed by chase. What could be more terrifyingly fun?

3 POINTS TO REMEMBER BEFORE YOU PLAY:

Consider using a safety word if kids need to stop play.

Funny ones work best to cut through any tension:

Raspberries, Snotbot, or Snagglefloogle for instance.

Let your kids know before play starts that punching, biting, and head butting are off-limits. If the rule gets broken halt play, remind the kids of the rule, resume play.

Try to play for as long as it takes for high energy to wind down to calm naturally.

GOT QUESTIONS?

Rachel is one of the instructors working to answer your questions personally in our free community, [the Parents Connect](#). Join today and get advice and recommendations when you need them. You can ask about the ideas you are using here, or any parenting question.

WHAT'S WITH THE CRYING?

WHY TEARS ARE A SIGN

So. You managed to pack in some powerful play.

You've switched sides and let your child rule. You started doing lots of Special Time.

Your child is loving this! She's all smiles in her tutu showing you her latest twirls.

And you go to bed happy that things are going well.

But the next day, before you go out to play on the splash pad, you ask her to put on some sunscreen and it's like you suggested she eat maggots! (or lettuce).

She screams and ducks away. And then? Tears!

Lots of them. Huh?

What's all this crying about?

**REMEMBER,
YOU DON'T
NEED TO FIX
ANYTHING!**



TEARS = TRUST AND CONNECTION

Tears are a sign your child really trusts and feels connected to you.

As you lean in, their sense of safety grows.

Your connection ups the safety.

You have fun.

They get a shadow of worry, or tension, or hurt that they have kept stored away.

They KNOW you'll be there when they need to let off steam.

So at the first chance they get, they go for it.

WHEN TO EXPECT TEARS & UPSET

- When you ask a child to do something they don't want to
- When they are going to try something new
- When you are planning on leaving
- After an especially great Special Time
- When they've really enjoyed winning
- When they have achieved something new
- Over a teeny, tiny scrape or fall.

The Need To Cry Is Real

Sometimes the need to cry gets so big it's like your child will use any excuse to launch into tears. They may slide on the floor. You know they haven't hurt themselves but still...

They cry.

They may demand to watch a show even though they know the rule is not until evening. When you remind them...



They cry.



You may ask them to do something they do all the time without a thought. They protest, then...

They cry.

But you know what happens after a cry?

They don't cry.

"EVERY TIME YOU LISTEN TO THEIR TEARS AND BIG MESSY FEELINGS THEY'RE HEALING FROM STORED HURTS. AS YOU CONNECT AND LISTEN YOU'RE ANCHORING THEIR BRAINS, HELPING THEM FIND BALANCE AGAIN, LETTING THEM REGAIN THEIR ABILITY TO THINK WELL. THEIR BRAIN COMES BACK INTO BALANCE. YOU'LL SEE THEM SHAKE OFF THE EMOTIONAL LOAD THEY'VE BEEN CARRYING. YOU'LL SEE THEM BECOME LIGHTER AND EASIER GOING," SAYS RACHEL.

- Remember, You Don't Need to Fix Anything
- Just you being there, keeping calm, and listening to the tears, anchors them.
- Let them work through their feelings at their own pace. Their tears will stop when they need to
- "It's hard," "I see," "I hear you," are all good alternatives to "Don't cry."

Do It Now

- Remind yourself that tears and upset will come.
- They are not your fault. Your child is showing you feelings he or she has bottled up.
- Staying close while your child cries is most helpful for them.

5

BUST AWAY BOREDOM

BOREDOM CAN LOOK LIKE:

- It can look like ungratefulness.
- It can look like laziness.
- It can even look like self-indulgence (after all, wouldn't you love to have a spare moment to feel bored? Heck, YES).

And because boredom feels like one of those “negative” traits, we try to diminish it.

We rush to quick fixes and suggestions of what to do. We think of it as a minor thing. An annoyance.



WHAT IS THE ROOT CAUSE OF BOREDOM?

WHY DO SUGGESTIONS FAIL?

When our suggestions fail—like our child rolls their eyes and tells us all of our ideas suck—we can try to punish it out of sight:

"Well, if you don't like xyz, just go mope in your room."

And we can get harsh:

"Just FIND something to do."

Or we can go into lecture mode:

"You have so many fun toys, way more than when I was small. If I told MY mom I was bored she'd xxxx..."

We've all been there.

BUT guess why that doesn't work?

Because the root cause of boredom is not ungratefulness, it's not laziness, it's not self-indulgence. It's none of those things.

Guess what it is?

IT'S DISCONNECTION.

Boredom happens when a child's thirst for fun and good times disappears. That happens when change knocks your child off their game.

So if boredom is born of disconnection, guess what the way out is?

It's you.

It's your time and attention which restores the connection. There's nothing wrong with your suggestions and ideas, they are just not the remedy.

The remedy for restoring that connection is you.

So lend a moment of your time and attention to help it pass.

**THE REMEDY FOR BOREDOM
IS CONNECTION**

Bust Boredom in 8 Steps

THIS 8-STEP PLAN TO BUST YOUR CHILD'S BOREDOM AWAY SEEMS COUNTER-INTUITIVE. BUT GIVE IT A GO. IT'S SUPER-CONNECTIVE, AND YOU MAY EVEN HAVE SOME FUN.

1

Remember that your child is good. When a child is bored, they've just run out of gas. Refill needed! If recent changes in routine has left you feeling rocky, imagine how it feels for them.

2

Don't try to fix anything, except your plan for the next 30 minutes. Put that on hold for a while. Don't suggest anything, just move next to your child and hold that moment. Flop down right wherever they landed when the boredom hit.

3

Let your presence and lack of worry about the situation sink in, so stay close and keep light. "Ohhh, bored, huh? Hmmm. Nothing to do. Wow, nothing to do..."

4

Listen to whatever your child can tell you about how awful it is to be bored.

5

It takes awhile to fill up a tank that's empty, but physical touch can help, with your child's permission. Try a gentle ask, or a playful one: "Would you like me to rub your forehead/ like a little shoulder massage?" or "It looks like your pant-leg might like a massage."

6

If your child needs to have a good cry about how life is not any fun at all right now, stay and listen. A good cry can be a big part of the solution.

7

After 10-15 minutes, try humor with a few silly (or gross) ideas of what you could do. The idea is not solutions, but laughter and connection. Blindfolded taste testing anyone?

8

If all else fails, stay close. Commit to being present in that moment. Sometimes that and doing little is just the right medicine. Your child's tank might signal "empty" for quite awhile, until it suddenly signals "full," and suddenly an idea pops out, and their racing off to get started.

6

IS SCREEN TIME SCREAM TIME?

YES WE DID JUST MENTION THE S-WORD!

It can be the vacation question we come to dread.

Nothing brings on more confusion and conflict.

It always has the parents in our community scratching their heads.

If you get past 8am some days without that request, it can feel like a victory.

Mom! Is it screen time yet?"

Let's dive into this sticky subject.

Start by getting super clear about what you feel about screens, and how that affects the limits you want around them. That way you can be clear with your kids about your expectations.

**"IS IT
SCREEN TIME
YET?"**

CONSIDER:

GET AS CLEAR ON SCREENS AS A SHINY NEW IPHONE

- Are all screens as bad as each other?
- What daily limit can you live with?
- What else do you need your child to do to make screen time more bearable?
- Is there a time you won't tolerate screens, for instance before breakfast, at dinner or when guests are over?
- What parent controls make you more comfortable? Do you want to buy protective technology, or make sure that all screen time happens close to you?



SCREENS AS CONNECTIONS?

YOU CAN CONNECT WHEN YOU ARE CONNECTED...

SCREEN TIME CAN BE CONNECTING TOO.

WERE THERE ANY SHOWS YOU REMEMBER WATCHING AS A FAMILY?

WHAT ABOUT MOVIES?

HOW DOES LOOKING BACK ON THOSE TIMES MAKE YOU FEEL?

HOW DO OTHER HAND IN HAND PARENTS HANDLE SCREEN TIME?

ASK RACHEL AND THE PARENTS IN THE PARENTS CONNECT, OUR FREE ONLINE COMMUNITY.



FIVE WAYS TO CONNECT

Screens are by nature disconnecting, here's how to reconnect

- **Set a time limit** and stick to it. It can be easy to get involved with our own tasks and let screen time stretch on, but that increases the chances that your child will become disconnected.
- **When our kids are more familiar with tech, it can be a great learning opportunity – for us!** Kids' confidence in their abilities grows when they are given chances to lead and direct, and that can help keep us invested when we have feelings about screens, screen time limits or what's being played.
- **Lean in.** If you are having trouble sharing enthusiasm for what your child plays or watches, try focusing in on their enjoyment of it instead. Watch your child rather than the screen.
- **Break off from your own task** five minutes early to join your child before you ask them to stop.
- **Don't assume.** You may find that while you thought your child was aimlessly scrolling Instagram she was actually making a stop-motion, or the show you thought was so annoying is introducing some interesting topics. Talk over the topics later, borrow books or extend them in "real-time" later.

HOW YOU DOING MAMA?

So far, we've talked strategies to help your kids unwind.

But what about you?

Do you find that YOU can't wait for vacation, and then you hate it?
That you have no energy to play or to listen?

Let's Talk Triggers

Any change in routine can trigger big feelings in your child.

And you.

"The emotional toll of dealing with our kid's school fallout is a big load to carry. Reaching in to connect with cranky kids feels exhausting, listening to big feelings many times in one day soon can be overwhelming." says Rachel.

What Are Your Triggers?

- You feel you have more to do than you can possibly get done
- No one played with you like you play with your kids
- No one ever listened to you cry with such understanding
- Is something wrong with your kids that they need so much attention? Are you giving too much?

The list goes on, and will reflect wrongs and hurts you felt in your life that never got the space they needed to heal.

GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION TO MAKE THINGS EASIER

GIVE YOURSELF WHAT YOU NEED TO MAKE THIS SUMMER SHINE A LITTLE BRIGHTER

Here Rachel shares 3 ways to reach out, because you can't pour from an empty cup.

BRING YOUR TRIGGERS TO SOMEONE WHO CAN LISTEN

SET UP LISTENING PARTNERSHIPS, A SIMPLE EXCHANGE OF LISTENING TIME, WHERE YOU EACH SPEND TIME JUST TO LISTEN TO EACH OTHER..

You can do this with a friend, or parent in our Parent Club. Use the time to:

- Figure out logistics for the school break or vacation.
- Give you a safe space to problem solve and come up with innovative ideas to make the holidays go well.
- Notice what really matters and what doesn't. You can choose to let go of some things, like a hot meal every day, so that you can focus on connecting with your kids.



ASK FOR HELP

THINK OF WHO COULD HELP YOU GET THROUGH THE BREAK, SAYS RACHEL.

- Could you get a teenage babysitter or grandparents to read to your kids online when you need a break?
- Could a neighbour get some food from the shops and drop it for you?
- Could you trade off childcare with co-parent or a family member in your bubble to make time for household chores, shopping, or rest?
- Could you join forces with another family? Schedule a virtual monopoly game or quiz online for both sets of kids or do bulk cooking for the freezer while you all chat?
- Could you designate some daily quiet time where you all recharge.

SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

- Anticipate challenges and you're more likely to like summer with your kids
- Plan for the reality that the first few days or week are likely to be emotionally charged and tough on your family.
- Use Listening Time to help bridge the gap between your hopes and your kids real need to ease into summer and enjoy it.

OVER TIME, YOUR LISTENING PARTNERSHIP WILL BECOME A SAFE SPACE TO LAUGH, CRY, RAGE

DO IT NOW

- Think of one person you can ask to help you with something.
- Decide on one expectation you can let go.
- If you have a Listening Partner, schedule in time now. Consider joining the Parent Club. It's a great place to get regular support.

YOU MADE IT!

You rock if you're here! Now you have seven go-to strategies to try when things get tough over the holiday break. Using just one or two will make a massive difference to your mood and your relationship, but we double dare you to give all seven a go and watch the positive changes take place.

Well done for doing this with us. Your role as a parent is vital and seen.

MEET RACHEL



Rachel Schofield is a Professional Member of the Australian Association of Family Therapists and a Certified Hand in Hand Instructor.

In her consults and classes she gives support and tailored guidance so you nurture yourself and have more fun with your family.

Get to know Rachel in our free Parents Connect group, where she is a moderator. To connect and say hi go to Facebook and search Hand in Hand Parents Connect.

Five simple tools to help with the tough times in parenting



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WANT A BLUEPRINT FOR BETTER PARENTING?

Wouldn't it be great if it was all laid out?

The truth is, there isn't a blueprint existing for your particular child's behavior.

But you can create your own super-connecting, clear, and brilliant blueprint for better parenting with help from **Parent Club**.

Membership gives you:

- Daily access to Hand in Hand Instructors
- Weekly live calls
- A monthly Q&A with Patty Wipfler
- Special resources like this guide
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- Free online class in Setting Limits
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FROM PARENTS WHO HAVE
BEEN THERE...**

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