



# An Inspired Childhood

Pre-School and Elementary Age



It is so easy to just turn on the television and let it entertain the kids. Trust me, I know! However, I have just learned that watching a lot of television actually changes the way a child's brain develops.

I'm not trying to be preachy. I really do understand how difficult and soul draining it can be for parents to try and entertain their children for hours and hours.

Apparently the less time children spend watching a screen, the more they begin to create entertainment for themselves. So, if a child watches a lot of television, their brain develops to be entertained and it becomes difficult for the child to think of something to do besides watching more television. The less television and screen time children watch, the more their brain develops ways to entertain themselves.

I mean it makes sense, but is it practical in this day and age?  
Aren't we creating socially isolated kids if we refuse to let them watch television?  
Don't they need computer skills to be up to speed in today's world?

Good points, but besides the brain function problem, studies show that the more television kids watch, the more anxiety they have about themselves.



I have to tell you, since we started introducing screen time limits, both of my own children are happier, better behaved, and playing creatively like I have never seen them do before.

I find it pretty interesting that their behavior does not bug me like it used to. A lot of the whininess has ceased. Life is much better!

What is there to do in this transition between letting the kids be entertained and creating an environment where they learn how to entertain themselves?

Here's a list to get your started:

1. Create a schedule and place it your fridge. Write down outside time, craft time, play-dough time, snack time, computer time and free play. Kids of this age thrive on schedules! Feel free to bend as much as needed, of course. You know your children best. Yet, this can help create a structured understanding and predictability in their world. Children build confidence when they know what to expect.
2. Start slowly with a television diet. Figure out how many hours your children are watching a week and cut it down by 10% the first week. See if they even notice. Keep cutting it down 10% more every few weeks. Weaning off slowly should be easier than cutting down drastically. Help your kids pick out their favorite shows. Write them down on the schedule to avoid any heartbreak.
3. Head outside when at all possible. Go to the park when you can. I have a friend who has *Picnic Park Tuesdays* all summer long. She packs a picnic in the morning and every week her and her kids go looking for a new park.
4. Take a walk around the block and talk about what you see. Use this together time activity to nurture whatever stage of development your kids are at. For instance, saying "bird" is perfect for a 2-year old while "Blue-Jay" is better for a 4-year-old and "How many feet up do you think that branch is?" would work best for a 10-year-old.
5. If there is a certain time of day where the children are used to watching television while you do some work that needs to be done, consider making it craft time instead. I am always



shocked at how happy my children become when given plain paper and markers or scissors and old magazines.

6. Suggest that your kids play music when they are having quite room time play.
7. Give them chores. Both of my kids LOVE to wash the windows, and I do let them since I only use a non-toxic spray and rags. They love it, and every once and a while the windows actually get clean.
8. Combine outdoor time, walking time and craft time. Get a bucket, walk around outside, and collect nature items. Come in, sit around the table, and make collages. I have never had a child be unhappy when given a bottle of glue either.
9. Go to the library and ask a librarian to help you find a wonderful children's book along with an audio recording so the kids can read and listen at the same time.
10. Let your children help you prepare meals or set the table.
11. Let your children help you with the dishes.
12. Check out home-schooling resources on the web to see what parents do with their kids. Many of these people do not use television, and there are a myriad of activity ideas out there.

**Here are some other great links for good screen free activities:**

[Nature Crafts](#)  
[Recycled Art Projects](#)

**A few good links for great, educational online kids activities:**  
(just be sure to limit their screen time)

[Sheppard Software Kids Corner](#)  
[National Geographic Geography Games](#)  
[Thinkzone](#)

***Sit back, enjoy your kids, and watch them bloom!***

