

Miss Katie's Kids Korner

Help Beat the Winter Blahs

by Katie Taylor

In ancient times at the winter solstice, lighted candles were put on fir trees to help illuminate the longest night of the year. These candles were lit nightly long past the "Christmas" season to keep up the spirits of the people of the village during the dark winter nights. Fortunately we now have electricity to illuminate winter evenings, but they are still long and dark. Especially for children who have become bored with TV, videos, and computer games.

Here are 20 activities that you and your children can do together to help beat the winter blahs:

- ☛ Take pictures and make a family slide show – This can be done inside or out. Every family has a photographer, but sometimes he needs an art director and, of course, actors. You can make picture-taking a family project with mom behind the camera, brother setting up the shot, and everyone else in the frame.
- ☛ Build a snowman – Snow-women, snow-children, and other structures, such as an igloo or barrier wall in case of snowball attack, are equally as entertaining.
- ☛ Go sledding – Sleds, tubes, and open cardboard boxes are all that's needed for hours of sliding fun.
- ☛ Go downhill skiing – Take **Rte. 52** to Holiday Mountain, where there's always snow, and is open six days a week. For information call: 845-796-3161.
- ☛ Go bowling – It's fun, it's inexpensive, and the whole family can do it. *Sha-Wan-Gunk Lanes*: 647-4380.
- ☛ Day at the health spa – For \$8, you and you teenager can spend the afternoon swimming, working out, and having a sauna and whirlpool at the *Hudson Valley Resort and Spa*: 845-626-8888.
- ☛ Take a walk – When there's snow and ice on the ground, even a walk around the block can become a hiking experience. It's also an excellent time to talk with your child.
- ☛ Take a class – There are a variety of classes offered right here in Ellenville for old and young children alike. *Kindermusik*, Taekwondo, story-time at the library, and numerous activities through the school are ongoing and either free or at a nominal cost to you.
- ☛ Go ice-skating – For \$7 per person, your whole family can go skating at the *Nevele Grande Hotel* (Skate rental is an additional \$5 and you need to call to reserve a time on the day you wish to skate: 845-647-6000)
- ☛ Play board games – Checkers, Clue, Life, Monopoly, Chutes & Ladders, Uno... the choices are endless and can

provide hours of enjoyment for the whole family.

☛ Bake cookies – For younger children, this is an excellent way to learn about measurements. For older children, it's fun to eat the batter.

☛ Cook a meal together – Involve your children in the daily stuff. Whether it's cooking dinner or cleaning out the hall closet, you are a family and your children need to be part of the every-day as well as the extra-curricular.

☛ Play cards – When math used to be called arithmetic, card playing was very popular. Its popularity has decreased in recent years, but card playing is an excellent way to learn about numbers, strategy, and, in the game of poker, psychology!

☛ Make craft projects – Next month, I'm devoting an entire column to craft projects. A.C. Moore in Middletown is a mecca for craft supplies. They even offer classes in crafts. For specific times, call: 845-344-6090.

☛ Sing silly songs – I recommend silly songs for getting a toddler to do just about everything. From washing hands to the tune of Row, Row, Row Your Boat (Wash, Wash, Wash your hands, Wash them every day!) to singing the "Clean up your face" song. (Any tune is good; if you know "You gotta eat your spinach,

baby," "You gotta wipe your face, baby" works well).

☛ Read aloud – Read to your child even after they have graduated from picture books. Reading aloud is both exciting and calming to your child, and it also helps develop listening and attention skills.

☛ Write stories – Make a game of it. You start, and then someone needs to add onto the story to give it a beginning, middle, and end. You can also illustrate it. Who knows, it might even get published one day.

☛ Make musical instruments – Think Tupperware, tape and rice; the basics for a great shaker instrument. Then make another one with beans and another with popcorn. Which is louder? Which is softer? Bigger? Smaller?

☛ Do an exercise video together.

☛ Put on music and dance around the room (This is only for young children who won't be embarrassed to dance with their parents).

This winter try to enjoy your indoor time with your children and keep in mind that winter doesn't last forever.

(Katie Taylor teaches *Kindermusik* at the *Christ Lutheran Church* in Ellenville and the *Neighborhood Facility* in Monticello. She's currently accepting applications for the Spring semester, which starts in February. For more information you may contact her at 647-7291 or email: ktyville@ulster.net.)



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216 Canal Street
Ellenville, NY
647-5321

