

Mean Mom's Summer Survival Guide

No more homework, no more books, no more teachers, dirty looks. Yes, school is out for the summer and the kids are free. Oh boy. Oh no! A kid's dream, a mom's nightmare!

How are you going to survive the next 3 months? You can send them to lots of camps, but that costs lots of money. You can send them to their grandparents' house, but they moved away after last summer. Maybe you can find them jobs. Well, probably not since they're only 7 and 12. Maybe you can run away. Now there's a thought! No, they would just follow you. So what do you do?

The answer is to become a mean mom. No, that doesn't mean to be nasty and negative and lock them in their rooms for the summer. It means to take charge and have a plan that you can stick to no matter what, even when sticking to that plan makes you unpopular.

A good mean mom focuses on two things above all else; safety and structure. These two together will make you not only a mean mom but a sane mom.

It will make you mean because the kids are looking forward to new adventures. They're also looking forward to freedom now that school is out. It's your job to deny too much of either. Feeling mean yet? No? Then keep reading.

Now, you don't want to ruin their summer, or yours. So you need to give them some freedom and loosen up some of the structure. But if you want to survive with your sanity this summer, there has to be balance and a plan. Here's how you do that.

First, you need to know what safety means at the different stages of development.

- Safety for toddlers keeps them from hurting themselves as they start to venture out on their own in their physical world.
- Safety for pre-school kids allows them to imitate what they learn and to use their imagination while keeping them in reality when it counts
- Safety for school-age kids gives them guidelines for how far they can venture out not just physically, but also socially.
- Safety for teenagers keeps them from situations that will require them to make judgments they're not ready for yet.

Second, decide what boundaries you need to set to keep them safe. These boundaries will give them structure. The boundaries you choose should come from your family's style and values.

- What guidelines do you have in your family for movies, activities, etc?
- What is out there that is unsafe for them to get into?
- What chores do they need to be responsible for?
- What kind of supervision can you realistically give? When it comes to supervision, don't forget to use your mom network. When they say they're going to Shane's house, tell them you'll call Shane's mom to be sure she's ok with that plan. And make the call in front of them. That is guaranteed to earn you the title "mean mom"! It will also earn you peace of mind, very important to summer survival.

Third, decide on your plan and stick to it. It will be easier to stick to it knowing it's based on these two critical factors and your family's values and style.

- When you have a foundation for a decision, you don't second guess yourself the way you do when the decision is made in the moment.
- You also are ready for the argument when it inevitably comes.

You can survive and even enjoy the summer with the kids at home, if you become a take charge mean mom. Setting clear boundaries and enforcing them consistently will help keep your sanity because when

boundaries are held consistently, kids test them less. They know what they can count on, which makes them feel safe.

Remember the poem; no more summer, no more brooks, no more mean moms, dirty looks!
