

SUMMER OF IMAGINATION

There's something magical and invigorating about summer. Maybe it's because we can finally go outside without multiple layers of clothing, or the feeling of sun on our arms and legs, or, if you're a kid, the fact that school is out. In any event, it's freeing.

One thing that kids today seem to be missing out on is imaginative activities. With iPods singing our songs for us, video games steering our activities and television making up our stories, it's no wonder that imagination has been lost in the shuffle. Summer is a time to right that wrong!

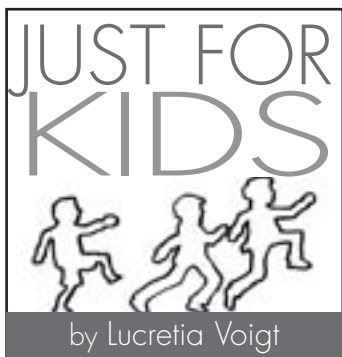
There are several great activities to jumpstart your kid's imagination. Reading books is, of course, my favorite. However, you can take it one step further by bringing the book to life!

In case your imagination is a little rusty from relying on Curious George or Clifford on PBS to give you a few free minutes (I'm speaking from experience here), let Theatre Workshop of Nantucket give you an imagination injection!

For the next three Tuesdays (July 3, 10, and 17), Theatre Workshop will be presenting "Story Time with a Princess," a children's interactive theatre. Downstairs at the United Methodist Church, at 5 p.m., your children will be whisked away from Nantucket to a new make-believe world. In this interactive production, audience members are called upon to become a part of the story using costume pieces, make-up and props. The remaining audience members create their own crowns to become part of the court. While a general story line is adhered to, improv is the name of the game, so your child is able to actively participate in the experience, creating the make-believe world and the fun.

If you find you are unable to pull your child out of the theatre after the production, consider signing your child up for a week of Drama Camp with the Theatre Workshop. Camps run one week, and begin July 2. There are three sessions, and your child can sign up for one or all three. In addition, Theatre Workshop will be working with the Boys' & Girls' Club to present Shooting Stars Drama Camp from August 13 - 17. For more information about the camps and the "Story Time with a Princess," you can visit Theatre Workshop's Web site at www.theatreworkshop.com or contact them at 228-4305.

After attending "Story Time with a Princess," your and your child's imagination should be flying high. Stories can be made up from your own experiences, but if



you need some help, check out some children's books at the Atheneum or at one of the local bookstores.

Consider a pirate-themed activity to fill your summer with treasures of fun. You can begin with

the book "How I Became A Pirate" by Melinda Long and David Shannon, a good selection for toddlers. For older children, "Pirates" by John Matthews, a larger book in a scrapbook style, with tidbits of information and drawings, is a book they will come back to time and time again.

For a costume, any bandana can work for headgear, or you can peruse the offerings at The Sunken Ship, where they stock several styles of pirate hats. Pirates tended to wear torn and beat up clothing, so recycle those play clothes you were about to retire to the "take it or leave it." Costume jewelry can become priceless jewels, necklaces and bracelets. If you don't have an eye-patch lying around, construct one from black cardboard and string. You can practice bellowing "Aarrggghh!" and before you know it the pirate spirit will be in your child's bones, making him swagger as he walks along Main Street.

A scavenger hunt, complete with map and a final treasure, can keep a kid busy for hours. If your child is a toddler, set up the scavenger hunt in the house and the yard. Consider burying the final treasure in the sandbox, marked with an "X" made from sticks. Keep the scavenger hunt to four or five items. Even children who can't read can participate if you draw a map and pictures of the items as opposed to writing the directions.

For older children, make the scavenger hunt throughout downtown. You can draw a map, or write directions, or both. Have them pick up items like Twizzlers from the Pharmacy, a ticket stub from the Starlight, a bookmark from Mitchell's Book Corner, a coffee cup holder from Even Keel, etc. This activity is more fun with multiple children, so enlist the help of another mother. One of you can go out ahead and make the arrangements with the retailers where you are sending your children. You can make the final destination the Juice Bar, and the treasure a banana split. You can be waiting at the Juice Bar for your pirates, or sit across the street on the benches at the Whaling Museum to watch them scurry in for their treasure!

Once you get your child's imagination going, it will be hard to stop it! That's usually a good thing, except for when you ask them who broke the new lawn chair in the backyard. Let them weave their tale, but don't believe it when they say a giant came over on the ferry and sat down in it. ■

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