

Healthy Family Healthy Child Project

Nuu-la' nuu-wa'sh-'vsh (Our hand we are giving)

By Angela Ramirez, Social Services Advocate

I need a timeout!

Imagine that it has been a long day of errands and appointments. You've finally made it home with groceries and the kids. It's summertime – the kids are hot and tired, you're hot and tired ... everyone is just a little bit cranky.

You're trying your best to fix a meal and the kids are arguing over who gets to sit closest to the fan. The squabble turns into a wrestling match and then escalates to one with pulled hair and a poke in the eye for the other. You get between the two kids before it turns into a live version of mixed martial arts.

Now what? You send them to opposite corners of the room for a timeout. You go back to finishing dinner. Dinner is quiet and the kids are picking at each other during what you had hoped would be a happy time to visit.

After dinner, the next quarrel begins with who gets to pick a movie to watch and the wrestling match is on again. You give up and send them to their bedrooms. You finally have some quiet time and ponder the fact that this seems to be an almost daily routine with little variation. How can you make a change?

Maybe taking a timeout is the answer – taking time outdoors, that is. Summer will be over soon and the kids will be back in school. Enjoy this time with them.

Do you have friends and neighbors you would like to spend time with? Do your kids have friends they haven't been able to see over the summer? Why not make a date to all meet up for a night out on either a weeknight or on the weekend?

Try starting with packing a picnic-style dinner the kids will like – peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, chips, granola bars, fresh fruit and ice water. If you have time, you can be more extravagant.

Pack up the food, the kids and head outdoors. It can be to a local park, the neighborhood playground or your own backyard.

When is the last time you played like a kid with your kids? Here is a list of games and activities you might want to try with them. Some of the games have a little bit of crafting you can do with the kids during a craft night in preparation for your night out.

1. **No shoes, that's okay!** Start the night out of the house by finding a nice grassy place. Have everyone take off their socks and shoes. Place them in a pile, the bigger the better. Continue your night out shoeless, enjoying the feeling of the grass on your feet. At the end of the night, make it a race to get your socks and shoes back on to head for home.
2. **Freeze Tag!** This works best with three or more players. You will need a spray bottle and ice water. Instead of tagging with a hand, tagging is replaced with a cool squirt. When a player is misted, they must freeze, but can squirt others still in play. The last player to remain unfrozen wins. This

will cool everyone down and set the mood for fun and laughter.

3. **Rainbow Tag!** With a handful of painted Popsicle sticks and four or more players you can play capture the flag meets hide-'n'-seek. Before your night out, you will need to purchase water-based face paint crayons in five colors and paint individual Popsicle sticks, one in each of the same five colors as the face paint. Bring along a pink or rainbow-colored shirt that is one-size fits all as well as wet wipes (baby wipes work great). While the kids are eating their picnic dinner, hide each Popsicle stick and the matching color of face paint in a different place around the area. Next, choose someone to be Pinkie, the player who sneaks around trying to tag the other players and undo their progress. Give Pinkie the pink or rainbow-colored shirt to wear. To play, send everyone but Pinkie out in search of the sticks. Each time a player finds one of the colored sticks, they should discreetly – don't give away the location to the others! – paint a stripe on their face then leave the stick and paint in place. Bluffing is encouraged to keep the locations secret. The catch: Pinkie will be lurking, trying to tag the players. Every time they do, Pinkie gets to wipe off one of the player's stripes. The first player to get one stripe in each color wins.
4. **Beach Towel Toss!** Have four or more players make several water balloons before you head for your night out. Store in a cooler or other sturdy box for the trip to the park. Grab some beach or large bath towels before heading out. When you are ready to play, divide players into teams of two and provide each team with a large towel. Holding their towel at the corners and standing six feet apart, each team must use the towel to toss a balloon back and forth with another team. After a successful toss, have the teams move farther apart. Play continues until the balloon breaks.
5. **Kick it through the wicket!** Kids can practice their soccer skills with this supersize version of croquet. During your craft night prep, you will need pliers, nine wire clothes hangers, colored tape, scissors, card stock and a permanent marker. Use the pliers to untwist the hangers, then bend each into a wicket (three-sided square) big enough for the soccer or kick balls to fit through. Cover the wire with colored tape. Cut circles from card stock, use a marker to



- number them 1 through 9, then tape them to the wickets. Before you head out the door for your night out, grab the soccer balls or other kind of kick balls; you will need one per player. Another thing you can do while the kids are eating their picnic dinner is set up the wickets in the formation of your choice, spacing them at least 6 feet apart. When explaining how to play, tell the kids each player gets 1 kick per turn, trying to send their ball through the wickets in order. When they get it through a wicket or if they hit another ball, they get a bonus kick. The first player to get their ball through all nine wickets wins.
6. **Bubble Brigade!** When you pack your supplies for your night out, bring along some bubbles. You will need a bottle of bubbles for each player; mostly you will just need the wand for each player. If you are a bubble enthusiast, you can buy wands that make really big bubbles. Before play begins, you will need a starting line, a designated turnaround point and two teams (with at least two players per team). Each team lines up, shoulder-to-shoulder. The first person on each team blows a bubble and catches it on their wand. They then pass it to the next player, who passes it to the next, and so on. If the bubble pops, the person passing it must blow another bubble and then pass it on. The first team to get a bubble to the end of its line wins.
7. **Bossy Ball!** On your craft night prep using masking tape and a permanent marker, ask the kids to write down 7-12 things they would do to pass a ball. Some could be "Overhead and backward," "Underhand between the legs," "Sitting down," "Standing on one leg," "Eyes closed," "In mid-jump," "While singing" and any others you can think of. When you are ready to play this game, it is played like regular catch, but once the first player grabs the ball, they must look at the words under or closest to the palm of their right hand. They have to throw the ball as directed by these words – and the second player has to try to catch it in the same manner. The second player then looks at the words under his right hand and play continues. To make the game more challenging, see how many successful catches you can make and then try to beat the record.
8. **Grab bag!** For your night out, bring along two paper lunch bags, pencils for everyone and 3"x 3" squares of paper. After your picnic dinner and before the evening of play begins, have all the players write down two fun activities they want someone to do. It can be things like "Hop to the tree and back," "Run to the slide, go down and run back," or "Do 25 jumping jacks." Have them write it down twice on the 3"x 3" paper. Have them put one copy of each activity into each of the paper bags you brought along so each bag has one of each activity.

When you are ready to play, you'll need a starting line, a designated turnaround point and two teams (with at least two players per team). The first player on each team runs to the turnaround point, returns to the start point, pulls a slip from the bag, performs the action and then returns to tag the next player, who does the same. The first team to finish all the actions wins.

9. **Color guard!** This is a mash-up of tag, basketball and color identification; it requires some lightning-quick moves. For the night out you will need to bring those leftover plastic Easter eggs or small hand-size balls of different colors and a large tub that can hold them all. When it is time to play, dump out the plastic eggs/balls – at least one per player – slightly away from the gaming area. Choose one person to be the color guard. The guard stands next to the tub with their eyes closed while the other players each get an egg/ball from the pile and move a few steps away from the guard. The guard then opens their eyes and shouts out a color. Any player holding that color egg/ball must now try to get the egg/ball back into the tub without being tagged by the guard. Players can throw their eggs/balls, but any that land outside the tub must be picked up by the thrower. Anyone who gets tagged or whose egg/ball is caught by the guard is out of the game. The last remaining player gets to be the color guard in the next round.
10. **Freckle Frenzy!** Your craft night prep will include using a three-hole punch and construction paper in an array of colors. Have the kids make as many punches (freckles) with the construction paper and put in sandwich bags. For easy setup for game play, separate the punches into even numbers into as many sandwich bags as people you are expecting for your night out of fun and laughter. You will need to take some small bowls or paper cups for this game to add water to. When it is time to play, pair up players as one freckle placer and one freckle wearer. Right before the game, dump a handful of freckles into small bowls filled with water, one for each pair. The judge sets a timer to 30 seconds, and at "go," the placer begins sticking freckles on their partner. When time is up, the judge counts to see which person is wearing the most freckles; the most freckled player's team wins.

Hopefully this has given you ideas on taking time out with your kids. Everyone gets busy, feels overwhelmed and has responsibilities. It is easy to lose touch and grow distant from what is going on with your kids. Remembering how to be a kid, have fun and laugh will increase the happiness for a healthy family and healthy children!

For more game ideas, check out spoonful.com or use the search term "family fun outdoors."