

The Summer You Actually Need, Not the One You Think You Should Have

By Anisa Lewis – Positive Parenting, www.anisalewis.com

Every June, without fail, the internet fills up with the same thing. Bucket lists. Activity guides. “100 things to do with your kids this summer.” Colour-coded timetables that assume you have unlimited time, money, energy and children who cooperate.

And every June, without fail, I hear from parents who are already exhausted before the holidays have even started. Not because they are doing anything wrong, but because they are measuring their summer against someone else’s highlight reel and finding themselves falling short.

So this year, I want to offer you something different.

Permission.

Permission to do it your way.

After years of working with families, here is what I know: there is no universal version of a “good” summer. There is only the version that works for your family, your children, your life, your budget and your sanity.

For some families, that looks like days out, adventures and a packed calendar. Wonderful. If that genuinely fills your cup and your children thrive on it, lean into it.

But for many families, it looks quieter. Slow mornings. Familiar places. The same walk you have done a hundred times. A paddling pool in the garden instead of a theme park. Film nights on the sofa. Not very much at all.

And that is not failing your children. That is knowing them.

Children do not need constant stimulation. They need you.

The research is consistent. What children remember about their childhoods is rarely the big days out. It is the ordinary moments. The feeling of being unhurried. The sense that they had your attention, even briefly. The summer they were allowed to be bored and discovered they were actually fine.

Overscheduled summers can be just as hard on children as unstructured ones. When every day is an event, there is no space to breathe, to process, to simply be. And children who do not get that space often show it in their behaviour by the time August arrives.

The comparison trap will steal your summer if you let it

Social media was not designed to show you the Tuesday afternoon when everyone was arguing over the remote and dinner was beans on toast. It was designed to show you the beach trip, the ice cream, the golden-hour photo.

You are not competing with that. You cannot compete with a curated version of someone else’s life. And it is worth reminding yourself of that every time you feel the familiar pang of “we should be doing more.”

More is not always more. Sometimes more is just more noise.

So what does your family actually need this summer?

Take five minutes and ask yourself honestly:

- What do my children genuinely thrive on?
- What drains them?
- What fills me up?
- What leaves me depleted?

Build from that. Even loosely. Even imperfectly.

A summer that is right for your family will always beat a summer that looks right on paper.

Your children do not need the “best summer ever.” They need a parent who is present enough to notice them, patient enough to weather the hard days, and relaxed enough to enjoy the good ones.

That is something no bucket list can give them. But you can.

Anisa Lewis is an accredited Positive Parenting Coach, speaker, mentor, and former deputy headteacher with over 25 years of experience working with families across the UK and internationally. She specialises in helping parents navigate the ups and downs of family life, whether it's managing anxiety, supporting challenging behaviour, or making home life feel smoother. Drawing on her educational background, coaching expertise, and real-life parenting experience, Anisa empowers families to break free from unhelpful patterns and build stronger, more connected relationships.

A mum herself, Anisa understands the real-life struggles of parenting and brings a warm, down-to-earth, and non-judgmental approach to her work. She offers one-to-one coaching, group workshops, school talks, and corporate training, helping parents make small yet powerful changes that lead to lasting, multi-generational impact. Inspired by Walt Whitman's quote, “Be curious, not judgmental,” she encourages parents to approach challenges with openness and confidence, proving that parenting doesn't have to be hard.