

RDCRS Summer Connections

RDCRS' Family School Enhancement Counsellors encourage you to **Build Simple Connections & Stronger Families** through active engagement with your family and community members while enjoying the natural and built spaces our community offers.

The Red Deer Catholic Regional Schools' **Family School Enhancement Counsellors** support the social, emotional and mental wellness of students and families within their home, school and community.

Family School Enhancement Counsellors (FSEC) meet with children, youth, parents and families to go over issues affecting student success through supporting them to look for options, develop strategies and find solutions.

Services offered:

- Provide support services & connections to community services for families and children facing social, emotional and family challenges.
- Promote effective communication and parenting skills.
- Build skills with students in small groups.
- Assist families in finding information and resources such as counselling or after hours crisis response workers.
- Collaborate with community agencies.
- Promote preventative opportunities within the schools and communities.

In addition to direct support by our Family School Enhancement Counsellors there are many resources and supports available in our community. Sometimes, it can be difficult to know what these are and how to access them. Through our community connections, we can assist families in accessing the services they need. Family School Enhancement Counsellors are able to work with individuals within the school, in their homes or in the community. Services are available year-round. Talk to your school to get connected! All services are voluntary and offered free of charge.



www.rdcrcs.ca/schools/fsec
[@familiesofrdcrs](https://www.instagram.com/familiesofrdcrs)
[#familiesofrdcrs](https://www.instagram.com/familiesofrdcrs)

As we celebrate the warm weather and reopening of community programs and facilities, we remember that regardless of limitations there are still opportunities to connect, rejuvenate, create and explore and time to create new memories and build upon the many skills our children have. **Check out the tips & resources provided for each topic.**

- Embracing Boredom
- Risky Play
- Strengthening Relationships
- Technology
- Peers & Adult Role Models



Fostering Resilience in Times of Stress

In her webinar, "*Supporting Children During COVID-19*" (CTRI), [Marwa Fadol, MA, RPsych](#), identified key factors for fostering resilience in children and youth during times of stress, including:

- **Supporting children and youth's attachment relationships**
- **Reducing exposure to stress**
- **Supporting children and youth's physical and emotional well-being**
- **Strengthening regulation skills**
- **Developing purpose and foster hope**
- **Supporting caregiver wellness**

Coping skills and along with caregiver support can buffer the impact of stress and foster resilience.

Discover more simple, everyday positive experiences, qualities and relationships that support healthy outcomes for children and youth.

Learn more about the 40 Developmental Assets at sparcreddeer.ca

THIS SUMMER, RDCRS' FAMILY SCHOOL ENHANCEMENT COUNSELLORS ARE ENCOURAGING YOU TO **BUILD SIMPLE CONNECTIONS & STRONGER FAMILIES** THROUGH ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY.

RDCRS Summer Connections

Michael Ungar in his article, "[Let Kids be Bored \(Occasionally\)](#)," shares that most folks who experience the temporary uncomfortable state of boredom will be motivated to find something stimulating to do. While describing the complaining child slumped on the couch, Dr. Ungar assures parents that the short-term experience of being bored "may be exactly what the child needs "to do"" (para. 1). He goes on to say that, "Children who experience a lack of programmed activity are given an opportunity to demonstrate creativity, problem solving, and to develop motivational skills that may help them later in life" (para. 2).

Embracing Boredom

Dr. Ungar points out that parents have a role in influencing a child's level of motivation. He describes a motivated child as "one who is raised to seek new experiences, not one who is endlessly protected from boredom" (para. 4). As an "antidote to boredom," Dr. Ungar suggests providing "children with an environment that lets them experience autonomy (*the ability to work a little on their own*), control (*the right to have a say over what they do*), challenge (*a small push beyond their comfort zone*), and intrinsic motivation (*the motivation comes from inside them*). Notice that the antidote to boredom is not an environment that programs children or removes responsibility from children to solve the problem of under-stimulation (boredom) themselves" (para 5). Parents provide support as children learn to navigate boredom with structure and creativity.

"It's hard to remember when our kids are bored that we don't need to rescue them, rather we can just let them be bored. And see what a beautiful place their boredom will take them."

Dr. Ungar suggests scheduling boredom (what a thought!), building times where there are no planned activities into routines, cautioning that, "Simply amusing our children endlessly may actually do them more harm than good. They will never learn how to act autonomously, accept responsibility for their own

well-being, seek out challenges that interest them, or learn how to self-motivate" (para. 6).

Dr. Ungar finishes up his article by saying that while "it is mildly unpleasant to be under-stimulated" "it is precisely this mild sense of discomfort that we provide our children which is, in the end, exactly what they need this summer to thrive" (para. 12).

Unger, M. (2012, June 24). Let Kids be Bored (Occasionally). Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/nurturing-resilience/2012/06/let-kids-be-bored-occasionally>

Tips and Resources

- Just like you used to schedule your child's naps, schedule in unstructured time dedicated to creative, exploratory and independent activities. *This places boredom as a predictable and expected part of their daily routine versus an unexpected state to, "get out of," or be avoided.*
- Work together to create a written list or jar of, "do together," and, "do on your own," activities. *This supports your child as they grow their problem solving skills.*
- Lego, crafts, trampoline, reading, dress-up, puzzles, etc.. are all great independent play activities! *Please note that boredom can also be enjoyed with a sibling or friend.*
- **Use of technology is most often a boredom-avoiding activity.** Exceptions would be something like looking up how-to information and then trying the DIY activity yourself versus "researching" it all afternoon without actually getting any "doing" done.
- A list of household "extras" can either steer your child into embracing boredom or putting in some extra effort around the house. Laundry, washing windows, picking weeds, we all have *that* list.
- Promote your child's talents and hobbies by helping them improve or learn alongside (ex: magic tricks, learn to draws, sports & chess).
- Embracing boredom is about embracing what's around you, so show your family pet some love!
- Encourage your child to practice mindfulness, "[Being in the Moment](#)," whatever the activity.

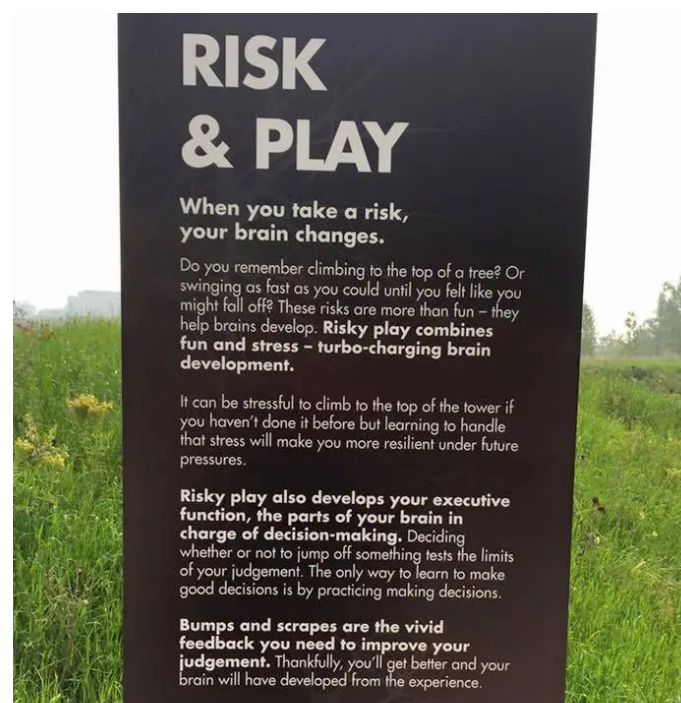
THIS SUMMER, RDCRS' FAMILY SCHOOL ENHANCEMENT COUNSELLORS ARE ENCOURAGING YOU TO **BUILD SIMPLE CONNECTIONS & STRONGER FAMILIES** THROUGH ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY.

RDCRS Summer Connections

While many parents urge safety, Brussoni, associate professor of pediatrics at UBC, shares that our children need increased opportunity to experience risky play outdoors. She describes risky play as “thrilling and exciting play where children test their boundaries and flirt with uncertainty” (para 3). She cites research that associates risky play with “increased physical activity, social skills, risk management skills, resilience and self-confidence” (para 3).

Why kids need risk, fear and excitement in play.

Brussoni highlights the importance of children, rather than parents or experts, being given the “mental and physical space to figure out appropriate risk levels for themselves: far enough that it feels exhilarating but not so far that it becomes too scary” (para 5).



Overprotective parents overwhelmed by the possibility of risk as well as risk-pushing parents worrying that their child is too timid and not taking *enough* risks can both “increase the risk of injury and harm since they ignore the children’s capabilities and preferences” (para 9). The potential for learning through exploration is enormous, when given the opportunity, children show “clear ability to manage risks and figure out their own limits” (para 14) rather than by an adult “constantly telling them what to do and how to do it” (para 9).

So, “What’s a parent to do?” As “setting unnecessary limits on a child’s play or pushing them too far” (para 15) can both be problematic, injury prevention professionals are moving to an approach of keeping children “as safe as necessary” (para 11). Brussoni summarizes by stating that “our role as caregivers is to give children the freedom to explore and play as they choose while supporting them in managing the real dangers that pose a serious and realistic threat to their safety” (para 15). This will look different for each child, each with different abilities levels, ages and interests.

For parents trying to find that balance, Brussoni and her team have developed Outsideplay.ca, an online tool to “help parents manage their fears and develop a plan for change... [it] can be as simple as counting to 30 before stepping in... Parents are often amazed by what they see” (para 18).

Brussoni, M. (2018). Why kids need risk, fear and excitement in play. Retrieved from <http://theconversation.com/why-kids-need-risk-fear-and-excitement-in-play-81450>

Tips and Resources

- Visit local parks, green and wild spaces.
- Visit [Bower Ponds](#), [Kerrywood Nature Centre](#), [Disk Golf Sites](#) and the [Outdoor Fitness Gyms](#).
- Instead of saying, “be careful,” try being more specific. For example: “notice your footing,” “that looks wobbly,” “there are thorns,” or “watch how close your stick is to _____ when you swing it.”
- Visit local [skateboard](#) and [BMX](#) parks
- Bike or stroll the [TransCanada Trail](#) system, [neighbourhood walking paths](#) or go for a hike!
- *There are many benefits to walking on uneven surfaces relating to healthy musculoskeletal development, including promoting better balance and strengthening muscles. This can be on grass, sand and stones as well as inclined paths.*
- [Paddle or play](#) along our rivers and beaches - **Follow all [water safety](#) guidelines.**
- Check out a Play Guide for types of play and how they benefit your child’s development <https://cmch.tv/moreplaytoday/play-guides/>
- Grab a free kids construction kit from Home Depot; practice using tools & materials together.
- Set up an obstacle course in the backyard.

THIS SUMMER, RDCRS’ FAMILY SCHOOL ENHANCEMENT COUNSELLORS ARE ENCOURAGING YOU TO **BUILD SIMPLE CONNECTIONS & STRONGER FAMILIES** THROUGH ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY.

RDCRS Summer Connections



Positive parent-child relationships are important for all areas of children's development. By **being in the moment, spending quality time and showing warmth, care and respect**, you can strengthen your relationship with your child.

Strengthening Relationships

Being in the moment is about tuning in and thinking about what's going on with your child. **It shows your child that you care about the things that matter to him**, which is the basis for a strong relationship.

Positive parent-child relationships are built on **quality time**. **Time together is how you get to know about each other's experiences, thoughts, feelings and changing interests**. Quality time can happen anytime and anywhere, in the middle of ordinary days and situations. It can be a shared laugh when you're bathing your toddler or a good conversation in the car with your teenage child. **When you spend quality time with your child, you're showing that you value and appreciate her**. You can take advantage of quality time to communicate powerful positive messages with your smiles, laughter, eye contact, hugs and gentle touches. **Try to plan some regular one-on-one time with each of your children**. Children have different personalities, and some children might seem to need less time than others – but they'll all benefit from special time with you.

Even in the early years with your baby, **developing trust and respect** is important. **Your child will feel secure**

when they learn they can trust their primary carers to meet their physical and emotional needs.

"Building good parent-child relationships" Retrieved from <https://raisingchildren.net.au/newborns/connecting-communicating/bonding/parent-child-relationships>

Tips and Resources

Keep Connected offers families ideas, activities, and experiences to help build strong family relationships.

<https://keepconnected.searchinstitute.org/>

Ideas to do together:

- Hikes or nature walk
- Ice cream bike rides
- Star gazing
- Sprinklers and water guns
- Tie dye your socks or an old t-shirt
- Scrapbooking
- Board games
- Picnics
- Movie nights
- Building forts
- Make smoothies or popsicles
- Science experiments
- Scavenger hunts
- Back to school prep
- Bubbles and kite flying
- [Red Deer Market](#)
- [Downtown Red Deer Market](#)
- Backyard camping
- Learn how to skip stones
- Share practical life skills, cultural practices and interests you enjoy: fixing a bike, sewing, baking, construction, fishing, volunteering or gardening.

Please phone and inquire about hours of operation, fees and restrictions before going.

- [Ellis Bird Farm](#)
- [Discovery Wildlife Park](#)
- [Sunnybrook Farm](#)
- U-picks
- [The Central Alberta Regional Museum Network](#)
- Aquatic centres & spray parks
- [Discovery canyon](#)
- [Mini Links Golf](#)

THIS SUMMER, RDCRS' FAMILY SCHOOL ENHANCEMENT COUNSELLORS ARE ENCOURAGING YOU TO **BUILD SIMPLE CONNECTIONS & STRONGER FAMILIES** THROUGH ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY.

RDCRS Summer Connections

In her article, “*Summertime, Playtime*” (2018), Leah Shafer asks the question, “How can we encourage social, independent and guided forms of play while keeping safety concerns and work schedules in mind?”

Summertime, Playtime

Shafer describes how in play, children practice solving problems, navigating physical and social environments, and test out how to show care, what is wise, and what is safe. Shafer quotes Ben Mardell and his expert opinion on play and intellectual, social, emotional and physical development,

“My take is that **any activity can be play or not play. The secret sauce is *playfulness*** — the ability to see a situation and be curious about it, realize it can be enjoyable, and take agency over it. “It’s like ‘A Spoonful of Sugar’ in *Mary Poppins*. Even cleaning up can be fun, if you have the right mindset” (para 5).



"Children learn as they play.
More importantly, in play,
children learn how to learn."

-O. Fred Donaldson

Shafer goes on to say that not all types of play encourage development, sometimes play is just zoning out or can actually be teasing and annoying. Shafer gives parents three indicators of playful learning to look for: **choice, wonder and delight**. She describes these in the following way:

“**Choice** looks like kids setting goals, developing and sharing ideas, making rules, negotiating challenges, and choosing how long to play.

Wonder looks like kids exploring, creating, pretending, imagining, and learning from trial and error.

Delight looks like happiness: kids smiling, laughing, being silly, or generally feeling cozy and at ease” (para 12).

Shafer provides [suggestions](#) on **fostering a playful household** while cautioning that, if your children have come to depend on technology, formal programs and tight schedules, they might initially fight it, complain of boredom and retreat into technology before rediscovering the joys of play.

How much screen time is too much screen time?

While recognizing the importance of academics and extracurriculars, Mardell describes summer as “a time to build other muscles, physically and emotionally, and in terms of leadership, resilience, and self-sufficiency.” So register in soccer, day camps, hockey academy and art class, but also look for opportunities (within structured programs or at home) to build, create and experiment.

So leave unplanned moments in everyday life. “When every moment of a child’s day is planned, what can get lost is the “openness and flexibility for new insights or creativity to arise, or for the imagination to run wild, or for kids to play with everyday objects in unique ways.”

Shafer, Leah (2018) *Summertime, Playtime* Retrieved from www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/18/06/summertime-playtime

Tips and Resources

- [Playtime, Downtime and Family Time](#): Parenting tips for teens, children and preschoolers
- The Family Digital Wellness Guide will give you a quick overview of your child’s stage of development and how it relates to the media they use. <http://cmch.tv/familydigitalwellness/>
- Do you have a question about how media affects the health and well-being of children and teens? Ask the Mediatrix and check out some FAQs <http://mediatrix.com/submit-a-question/>.
- Try scheduling tech time so children and youth know *when, and when not*, to expect permission.
- [S.P.O.I.L.](#) a screen-free system for prioritizing those activities which have the largest positive impact on child development.
- Play video games and look at social media **with** your child. Ask what interests them about the platforms and who they follow. Discuss conduct.

THIS SUMMER, RDCRS’ FAMILY SCHOOL ENHANCEMENT COUNSELLORS ARE ENCOURAGING YOU TO **BUILD SIMPLE CONNECTIONS & STRONGER FAMILIES** THROUGH ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY.

RDCRS Summer Connections



Helping your child develop strong peer relationships and adult role models.

Parents worry about their kids being “followers” and making decisions based on what’s “cool” with their peers. Here’s a tip: children are born to be followers - but they were meant to look to you and other nurturing adults for direction. “The secret of parenting is not in what a parent does but rather who the parent is to a child [the attachment relationship]. When a child seeks contact and closeness with us, we become empowered as a nurturer, a comforter, a guide, a model, a teacher or a coach” (para 13). **Moms, dads, guardians & caregivers - your relationships with young people matter.** Time together matters, absolutely. But **how you are**, when you are **with young people**, really matters.

Neufeld, G, Maté, G. (2013). Hold on to Your Kids. Retrieved from <https://drgabormate.com/book/hold-on-to-your-kids/>



Work towards keeping your Medicine Wheel balanced:

- **North** (white): Spiritual - Taking time to pray and have faith.
- **East** (yellow): Mental - Taking time to work on having a growth mindset & positive self-talk.
- **South** (red): Physical- Getting enough sleep. Drinking water. Staying active.
- **West** (black): Emotion - Talking about how you are feeling. Checking in with family and friends.

Developmental relationships are connections that help young people be and become their best selves.

Search Institute has identified five elements—expressed in 20 specific actions—that make relationships powerful in young people’s lives:

- **Express Care:** Show me that I matter to you.
- **Challenge Growth:** Push me to keep getting better.
- **Provide Support:** Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.
- **Share Power:** Treat me with respect and give me a say.
- **Expand Possibilities:** Connect me with people and places that broaden my world.

Developmental Relationships Framework. Retrieved from www.search-institute.org/developmental-relationships/developmental-relationships-framework/

Tips and Resources

- Arrange playdates at your house or in the community. *If you are not comfortable maintaining physical distance, connect with the other parent and plan a similar activity (at home or in the community) and have your children video call after to talk about their experiences.*
- Make an extra batch of playdough, cookies, or a craft/game kit and delivery to a friend. Enjoy together, or send photos and video call to share the experience and express gratitude.
- Alternatively, share a link to a dance routine, bike trick or virtual challenge. Challenge taken!
- Consider playing a low contact sport like tennis, badminton, table tennis, pitch practice, or beach volleyball and play in *family teams* to increase physical distance with non-family members.
- Do a kid-swap and enjoy a shared interest with your niece, nephew, grandchild, neighbour’s or friend’s kids for a few hours.
- We all eat. Grab some firewood, invite friends, and visit one of the City of Red Deer [picnic sites](#). You can even borrow a [“Picnic Pak”](#) of games.
- As a family share your favourite activity to do together, then invite another family to join you.

THIS SUMMER, RDCRS’ FAMILY SCHOOL ENHANCEMENT COUNSELLORS ARE ENCOURAGING YOU TO **BUILD SIMPLE CONNECTIONS & STRONGER FAMILIES** THROUGH ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY.