

Let's Bring Back The Old School Summer

BY: CHRISTINA REIS

When I think back to my happiest childhood memories, I think about summer: riding my bike, getting my hands dirty in the backyard, building forts, and going to the pool. Even on days where there was “nothing to do,” my friends and I would come up with something. That’s what kids do best: play and use their imaginations.

Unfortunately, today, children are too often filling up this “down time” with “screen time.” In the United States, 37% of teens spend 5 hours or more a day on YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, and 1 in 5 say they’re on TikTok and YouTube “almost constantly.” Children ages 8 and under spend an average of 2.5 hours a day on screens. And 40% of 2 year olds have their own tablet.

Some experts have described smartphones and social media as pacifiers, as they provide an escape from frustration, boredom, and any sort of discomfort. This means that the emotional muscles that we need to tolerate ourselves and the feelings that come with being human are atrophying. And with children, they’re not developing in the first place because they’re simply not spending enough time in the real world.

The wide-open days of summer can be daunting for parents, and understandably so. It’s so tempting to give your children a device to pass the time. And it’s not your fault: Big Tech has purposefully engineered their products to be addictive. But we need to make it our mission to bring back the invaluable benefits and joys of an “old

school” childhood. That’s why I’ve started a local chapter of Mothers Against Media Addiction (MAMA): to form a supportive community that can help each other navigate parenthood in this complicated digital world that we’re in.

MAMA (wearemama.org) is a grassroots movement of parents and allies fighting back against media addiction and creating a world where real-life experiences remain at the heart of a healthy childhood. Our mission has three parts: educating parents, getting smartphones out of schools, and ensuring technology products have basic safeguards like all other consumer products. Our local chapter will focus on educating parents, offering opportunities for action, and creating a community that can support each other in the effort to get our kids back in the real world.

I’m a La Grange resident and the Chapter Leader for our local chapter of Mothers Against Media Addiction (MAMA). We are a grassroots organization with 40+ chapters nationwide, and our goal is to protect children from the harms of addictive technology, including smartphones, social media, and AI chatbots.

If you’d like to attend a meeting or learn more, you can sign up to be a member of MAMA La Grange at bit.ly/4tmyQEH or email reis.p.christina@gmail.com. Parents working together to educate and support one another means no parent has to navigate these challenges alone.

Kids need what they’ve always needed: free play, outdoor time, and time to connect with loved ones. Screen time displaces these real-world experiences that are critical for healthy development. This summer, let’s work together to bring back the gift of boredom and unstructured free play.



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