



## **USEP-OHIO PARENT TIP: Time Choices-Challenges**

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Vacation time brings so many delicious choices and challenges to each day. It is the first time in months kids have some breathing room to choose what to do with their time. Most of us look at the kids in our family and marvel at how much they have changed since last year. Their old shorts don't fit! Their physical, social-emotional, intellectual, and spiritual skills have all developed. We hope they have grown in each area and developed skills that are a source of pride and create a sense of achievement or mastery. Each of us grows as we master skills throughout our lives. Some we acquire quite naturally, like talking or smiling back when talked to. Others we can choose, like learning to sew.

One summer, brothers Jonathan and William became fascinated with Pokemon. Their interest in Pokemon served as a vehicle to teach them the skill of memorization. They discussed and described details like positive or negative characteristics of each Pokemon, and ranked them according to their powers. They could go on explaining for a half-hour or more, as I tried to look incredibly interested. We did not always share their interest, but everyone in the family recognized the amazing intellectual and social skills the boys were honing in their quest to master Pokemon. Today, they no longer study Pokemon, but the memorization skills they learned have helped in school and translated to academic mastery and better grades!

*Time in each day is like money that a child has to spend. Each has a finite number of days to practice developing skills. Kids do not all have equal advantages of health, education, housing, money, social*

*opportunities and access to the world around them. But they all have the same resources of time – hours in each day to spend on productive challenges or on time-wasters.*

We adults can offer guidance to help them make choices for spontaneous, imaginative play and activities that build their character and skills. Kids don't all need to spend time in the same way, nor in pursuing the interests of their parents. But all parents should help by giving careful thought to the choices based on the child's interests and the resources available to them. Try neighborhood programs, day camps, reading groups, and church programs for inspiration.

Parents can provide structure, supervision, and direction, which will help a child to develop individuality. If time is well balanced, it will provide for freedom, balanced with planned activities that help kids meet new people, have new experiences, develop new talents, and see new possibilities. These moments have an enduring, lifelong influence on kids. Endless exposure to TV, computer games, fighting with siblings, hanging out, and physical inactivity can result in loneliness and withdrawal as a child loses out on activities that make life rich and significant. Make plans, especially designed for each child. **Children who know they are contributing to the family - responsible for some tasks and learning new skills – feel valued and important.**

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