

Unplugging Wired Kids: A Vacation from Technology and Social Media

The Momoir Project

1 It's day one of our vacation on Cortes, a remote island in the BC wilderness¹ and my son is literally lying on the couch of our rustic² A-frame moaning, "iPhone. iPhone. iPhone." In front of him is a wall of windows facing a glistening ocean and coming in from the open deck doors—a warm, beautiful breeze. Clearly, he sees and feels none of it. He's too deep in his electronics withdrawal.

2 Back at home in Vancouver, after five minutes of listening to this kind of groveling, I'd normally relent. Instead of screaming "Shut up," I'd hand it over in defeat. He'd win.

3 Not here. We came here to get away from it all—our lives, technology, the constant pull of e-mail, Facebook, video games, and the never-ending ping of the iPhone.

4 Before we left, I told my 10-year-old son the rules: We were all going electronic-free for a week. There could be a few movies on the odd³ night, but no TV, no video games, no e-mail. And here we are on day one and already, he can't stand it.

5 My 6-year-old daughter and my husband are doing just fine. They are outside on the deck carving pieces of driftwood and singing. Meanwhile, my son is inside blinded to the opportunities in front of him, complaining that he doesn't like the beach.

6 Confounded, I walk outside to let him suffer. I walk down the grassy pathway to the beach. It's so stunning, I can barely manage to read on my blanket. I just want to stare out at the islands and the glistening ocean. The eagles soar overhead. The seals pop their heads out of the water, and there isn't another soul in sight. My son can do whatever he wants. But he's not going to ruin the quiet and beauty of this trip for me.

7 Day 2. We spend the entire morning, and part of the afternoon, digging for clams and oysters and swimming in the lagoon. My son is one with his shovel, looking for the smallest clams and filling buckets with shellfish and other sea treasures. When we get back to our cabin, I give my son his book, put him in the shade on a lovely garden swing and it's almost dinner when he looks up.

8 The next few days pass in a blur of sun and sand. My husband ensures we do something every day to get out of the cabin and explore. One day, we all spend an afternoon swimming at the freshwater lake. Another day, my husband takes my son on a three-hour hike around the headland.

9 On day 6, he's lying beside me on the beach watching the sunset. We are wrapped together in a blanket and as I watch him play with the sand in his hands, the grains slipping through his fingers, I realize how much time has slowed down for both of us. It's exactly what I wanted. Finally, after just a few days, we are able to sit quietly without twitching, without thinking about screens, without the constant interruptions of phone calls and e-mail. Two hours pass, and, in that time, he happily throws rocks into the water, listens to a man play guitar down the beach, plays Frisbee in the grassy field behind us.

10 He's too young to see it, but it's clear to me. A week away from our dependence on electronics and we've slowed right down. We are breathing deeper and, literally, noticing the grains of sand. Life is good. If only we could live on vacation.

11 How do you handle the influx of technology in your house? How do your kids handle it? Do you ever feel the need for a vacation from technology?



¹wilderness: a large natural area of land that has never been farmed or built on
²rustic: simple and old-fashioned in a way that is attractive and typical of the countryside
³odd: different from what is expected

COMPREHENSION

Work with a partner. Complete each statement according to the reading.

1. At the beginning of the vacation, the author's son couldn't enjoy himself because.

2. This vacation was unusual because

3. One way the husband helped break the dependence on electronics was

4. The result of a week away from electronics was

Read the excerpts from Reading Two. Explain in your own words what the boldfaced pronouns refer to.

1. "We were all going electronic-free for a week. There could be a few movies on the odd night, but no TV, no video games, no e-mail. And here we are on day one and already, he can't stand it." (paragraph 4)

Explanation:

2. "I realize how much time has slowed down for both of us. It's exactly what I wanted." (paragraph 9)

Explanation:

3. "He's too young to see it, but it's clear to me. A week away from our dependence on electronics and we've slowed right down." (paragraph 10)

Explanation: