

# SWEET SUMMER MEMORIES

by Sarah Hood

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One of my most vivid memories of summer as a kid was the somewhat relaxing of “the rules.” Every day during the school year, there was a defined and trusted routine, and everything revolved around semesters and report cards. Being a family with four children there was always the constant juggling of activities and clubs. As we got older everyone began running in different directions, and it became increasingly hard to get everyone in the same place at the same time especially when it came to dinner.

But in the SUMMER – different story. Somehow, time slowed down. No tests. No semesters. No real deadlines or due dates. As a kid, summer seemed to stretch on forever. We slept in. We watched TV. We played outside for what seemed like an eternity – since it never seems to get dark in the summer! It’s incredible what a different atmosphere our house would be during those precious days of summer.

## So what happened?

Well, I inevitably grew up and summer obligations began to emerge. Summer jobs. Summer school. Summer reading. And slowly but surely the free-spirited bliss of childhood summers became nothing but a cherished memory. I graduated college (after all that summer school!) and started my first real, grown-up job – and wouldn’t you know it - my office operates all twelve months of the year. Even in the summer!

My life began to get more complicated. I got married and went from juggling one schedule to juggling two schedules. My personal life and professional life became one big inbox filled with appointments and emails and texts and status updates. My friends and family all seemed to have bustling jobs and bustling lives – all of us competing in some imaginary contest to see who could fit the most into our day. I still don’t know if we were winning or losing.

Then I had a baby and the whole thing turned upside down. In some ways, time slowed down. In other ways, it moved into warp speed. Suddenly there were schedules I had never dreamed of – sleeping schedules, diapering schedules, feeding schedules. All layered onto the working, sleeping, eating, functioning schedule that already existed in our house. *Exhale...*

I’ve read that when a person’s focus and energy is divided among multiple priorities their overall effectiveness decreases. If you try to focus on too many things, you end up essentially focusing on nothing. You are constantly anticipating the next thing, the next phone call, the next assignment, the next appointment. You eventually lose the ability to live in the moment.

*Sound familiar? Yeah. I know.*

But there’s hope. And it’s here. Summer. Sweet summertime. It’s your chance to get it all back. It’s about showing your kids that you work hard AND play hard. It’s about letting your hair down and having popsicles for supper. Let summer be your chance to take the long way home. Windows down. Radio up. Teach your kids what summer is all about. The real kind of summer. The kind that is sure to produce dirty hands and sun-kissed cheeks. Stay up too late watching fireflies from the back porch. Play hooky from work and see a movie. There will always be a next appointment and there will always be the threat of Fall and back-to-school and then the bustle of the holidays. But let it seem a million miles away. Give your kids (and YOURSELF) a much needed, classic childhood summer.

Admittedly, I am terrible at this. I am the person who has to schedule time to be spontaneous. English professors everywhere are always encouraging their students to “just write.” Get everything out of your head and down on paper – then go back and make edits. And I’ve never been able to do it. I can’t “just write.” I am an edit-as-I-go kinda girl. And I find myself living that way, too. I find myself worrying about everything being ‘just so’, instead of being able to leave dishes in the sink, throwing on a hat and heading to the playground.

I NEED this summer. I may be an edit-as-I-go girl, but I’m ready. Bring it on. Bring on the blazing sun, pesky mosquitoes, and freshly cut grass. This is the first summer our little boy will be right in the middle of the action, and I’m committed to spending the next few months planting those first few seeds that will eventually blossom into a childhood full of sweet summer memories.