

February 2018

**Want happy kids? Give them more experiences and less stuff**—Research shows that if you want to be happy, you should spend your money on experiences instead of things. It turns out, the same theory holds true for your kids. According to the latest study, kids get so much more out of an experience than they do from the latest toy or gadget. And more often than not, the type of experience matters less than the sense of connection it brings. Cindy Chan, an assistant professor at the University of Toronto and the lead author of the study, noted that experiential gifts are more likely to build long-lasting memories for kids because of the emotional connection that accompanies doing something rather than getting something. "An experiential gift elicits a strong emotional response when a recipient consumes it — like the fear and awe of a safari adventure, the excitement of a rock concert or the calmness of a spa — and is more intensely emotional than a material possession," says Chan. Why are those good childhood memories so important? They build an emotional foundation that kids can turn to as they get older when they're sad, or stressed, anxious or worried. According to child psychotherapist Dr. Margot Sunderland, positive memories help kids regulate stress, increase attention span, build concentration, and improve overall physical and mental health. Happy memories serve as "anchors" that give kids comfort when life throws them a curveball. Not only do experiences help kids build a solid foundation of happy memories, they also help promote brain development. "An enriched environment offers new experiences that are strong in combined social, physical, cognitive and sensory interaction," said Sunderland. Every time you do something that's outside your day-to-day activities, you give your kids a chance to see, smell, hear and touch things that add to their overall experiences and help enrich their brains.

## Does where you go matter?

The research left us wondering one question: does the size or type of the experience matter? Would a family outing to say, the local ice cream parlor, build as strong of a memory as a family vacation to Disney World? You'll be glad to hear that it doesn't matter. In fact, kids are more likely to have a strong, comforting memory of a special trip for ice cream in which their loved ones were engaged and happy than they would of an exciting but stressful trip to the "happiest place on Earth." Pennsylvania mom Cathy Hagadorn experienced this first-hand when she took her two daughters to Disney and all they wanted to do was swim in the hotel pool. Kristin Vaughn, a mom of two from Virginia, says that her kids — who are now in their teens and twenties — often remember their family trips to the local garden maze as some of their fondest childhood memories. And according to mom-of-five Sandra Modersohn's kids, who range in age from toddlers to tweens, "it's all about how relaxed mom and dad are about the whole thing." Trips with no agendas and no stress were the ones that her kids enjoyed the most. Virginia tween Sophia Williams said it best: "Stuff you can grow out of, but memories you can't."

So yes, those gadgets in the toy aisle are fun for a moment. But a solid foundation of memories built on family experiences will bring your kids happiness and comfort for years to come — and that's priceless. <https://www.mnn.com/family/family-activities/blogs/want-happy-kids-give-them-more-experiences-and-less-stuff>

## Milestone Minute

- New experiences help your child build neural pathways. Exploring the world helps the brain grow.
- Different teaching methods and other intervention strategies can help kids with learning and attention issues develop new pathways and build more skills.
- At every stage of development, there are things you can do to help your child learn. [www.understood.org](http://www.understood.org)

## Sunrays

"Good character is not formed in a week or a month. It is created little by little, day by day. Protracted and patient effort is needed"  
~Heraclitus

## Up & Coming

### Kids Have Stress Too!

Strategies to help children (4-9years) deal with stress.  
Friday's  
Feb 23-Mar 9  
2:30-4:30



## Home Safety

- Ensure child is supervised at all times
- Check that each room is safe
- Check that outside areas are safe
- Make any necessary changes to make your home safe
- Keep a list of all emergency numbers near your phone

For more information please contact 403-207-7050