

Is Summer Over Yet?

by Jennifer G. Williams

I remember when my girls were little. I would see all those late-summer commercials with countdowns for back-to-school and parents celebrating the return of their kids' daily grind. I remember thinking, "How horrible! I would hate sending my little darlings back to school and away from me. I would miss them so much!"

I get it now.

My daughters are entering the second and fourth grades in a few weeks, which means I will be all by myself from about 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Ahhhhhh!

It's not that I don't like being around my girls—I love it! But this summer, in particular, has been hard. I started working full-time from home after we PCSed and the girls started school last year. I figured I'd have plenty of time to get things done now they were both in full-day school. And I did... while they were in school...

I forgot about the summers.

This summer's magazine production schedule was busy, and I found myself saying, "Yes, I will come outside and play with you as soon as I finish a few more things for work." And those few things would take a few more hours. My heart would break when they would come inside, popsicles in hand, and ask again when I was coming to play with them.

After a few weeks of this, I reminded myself how much I would miss these times when they get older and stop asking me to play.

So I set up a schedule to get up extra early, work a few hours, then do things with the girls during the day. I would check emails periodically during the day, and go back to work for a few more hours after tucking them into bed.

We set up art projects for rainy or extra-hot days, and we tried to spend as much time as we could outside on nice, sunny days. But some days, I just couldn't get around working during normal business hours, and those seemed to be the days when the girls needed the most attention.

And those early-morning, late-night sessions started to wear on me. I would be so tired on the weekends, I found it hard to enjoy doing things with my husband and the girls.

I talked with my Mom about it, her having raised four of us, and she told me to relax! She said it's good for kids to have their own time — not to be entertained by me all the time. So, those days when I let them watch movies or play video games all day don't bother me so much anymore, since they are more the exception than the rule.

And moms need breaks, too. With so much on our plates these days, it's easy to forget to take time for ourselves. Whether it's having a quiet cup of coffee before the kids wake up



Back-to-School can mean excitement, anxiety, and for many parents...relief.
Photo by Jennifer G. Williams

or watching a silly show after they go to bed. Go to dinner with a friend once your spouse comes home or swap babysitting duties with a friend to get some work done, or shopping done—or just to take a nap—it's important to take the time to unwind from the 24/7 stresses of the day.

My Mom says she would periodically lock herself in the bathroom for a few moments of peace. The mental picture of that still makes me smile.

It's amazing how the little things don't bother me as much once I've had even a small break. I tend to have more patience with my daughters and we all have more fun.

Now, with just a few weeks left before they go back to school, we are spending our days doing back to school shopping and stocking up on school supplies. We are also trying to squeeze in those last bits of fun — all while I am trying to finish this issue of *Military Families Magazine*.

And while we've all had a fun summer — and I know better how to plan for next summer — I am ready to settle into a more "normal" routine once that school bell rings. ●

Jennifer G. Williams is a military brat turned military spouse. She is the Editorial Director for AmeriForce Publishing and the Editor of *The Military Families Magazine*. Tell her your own Family Story at JenniferW@AmeriForce.net.