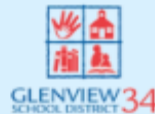




Parent



Connect

# Smooth Sailing: Survival Strategies for Maximizing Summer Fun and Emotional Wellness

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Family Service Center

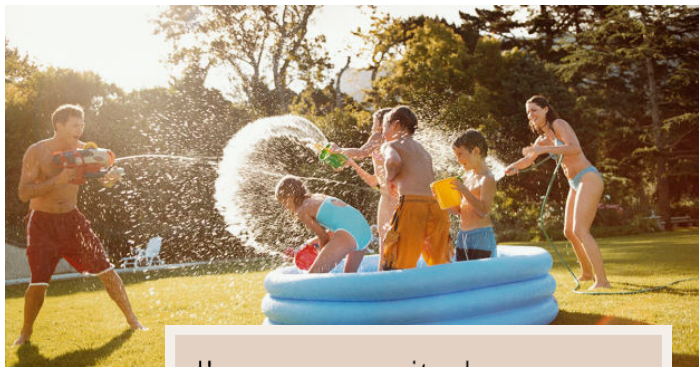
# Overview

- ▶ Discuss the unique opportunities and challenges the summer months offer;
- ▶ Identify elements of Emotional and Physical wellness, and examine the influences summer schedules have on health;
- ▶ Examine SEL Competencies and how they can be used in the home;
- ▶ Identify specific tips and tricks for a smooth summer.

# Here Comes the Sun...



Summertime can be both amazingly fun, and amazingly difficult.



I'm more excited  
about my kids  
starting camp  
than they are.



# What makes summer different?

- ▶ No school
  - Less structured activities
  - Time away from friends
- ▶ Less pressure
  - Not always being 'graded'
  - More opportunities to relax
- ▶ More time together as a family
  - Vacations
  - Opportunities to observe their behavior





# Finding Balance

- ▶ *Life is about balance. The good and the bad. The highs and the lows. The pina and the colada. –Ellen DeGeneres*
- ▶ *There never was a child so lovely, but his mother was glad to get him asleep. –Ralph Waldo Emerson*

# Parent Wishes...

- Wish for effective planning—the best activities, the most effective preparation, the right bedtime, right amount of screen time, scheduled playdates with the right friends, etc.



- Wish for ability to “go with the flow,” to be fun, for flexibility when plans go awry, for attunement and acceptance with your child/yourself/your partner, etc.

# Wellness

## ▶ Attending to physical needs

- Sleep

- Inconsistent schedules are usually part of summer, but give them the opportunity to sleep in and **recharge**..

- Nutrition

- Snacking at home, vacations can throw off habits

- Exercise

- May decrease without scheduled gym time, but also more opportunity to try summer sports/athletic clubs. **Take advantage of the nice weather– play outside**, go for bike rides, go to the pool/lake, etc.

- Hygiene/Self-care

- hair combed, teeth brushed, change out of pjs, baths/showers

# Wellness

- ▶ Attending to emotional needs
  - More opportunities to connect
  - Time to play (to engage in their own words/worlds)
  - Children thrive when given ways to meaningfully contribute
    - Help around the house in fun ways (e.g., garden, weed picking race, build bird feeders, paint a fence, cook dinner)
    - Be a friend to someone who needs help
  - Find ways to talk about and support positive self-esteem
- ▶ SEL Competencies can show the way!

# Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

The process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.



# What is SEL?



- ▶ An action plan to increase the likelihood of kids being connected and feeling understood (applied both at school and the home)
  
- ▶ Social and Emotional Learning refers to learning about and improving competence in 5 areas (a great definition of mental wellness):
  - Self-Management
  - Social Awareness
  - Relationship Skills
  - Responsible Decision Making
  - Self-Awareness

# Why is SEL Important?

- ▶ Long-term, comprehensive approach to difficult social challenges (bullying, student apathy, substance use, decreasing empathy)
- ▶ Our schools have invested in SEL—it is a key to achievement and required by the State Board of Ed.
- ▶ Adding SEL instruction has a big impact on student success:
  - Test scores
  - Behavior problems in school
  - Addiction
  - Depression and anxiety



# Parents and SEL

- ▶ You are the role models
- ▶ You set the tone—your ability to connect, your attention to the emotional life of your family, the environment and household, the norms you create
- ▶ You are the instrument
  - “It’s not what you know, it’s who you are” Brene Brown



# Kids' Emotional Needs

- ▶ Respond—seek understanding
  - Connection—physical and emotional
  - Attunement—I see you, I hear you, it matters to me
    - Acknowledge feelings, see the best in them, provide support, provide encouragement, notice the good around you, forgive mistakes, wish them the best.
  - Belonging
    - Let them know there's room for everyone

"People will forget what  
you said, people will  
forget what you did, but  
people will never forget  
how you made them  
feel."

- *Maya Angelou*



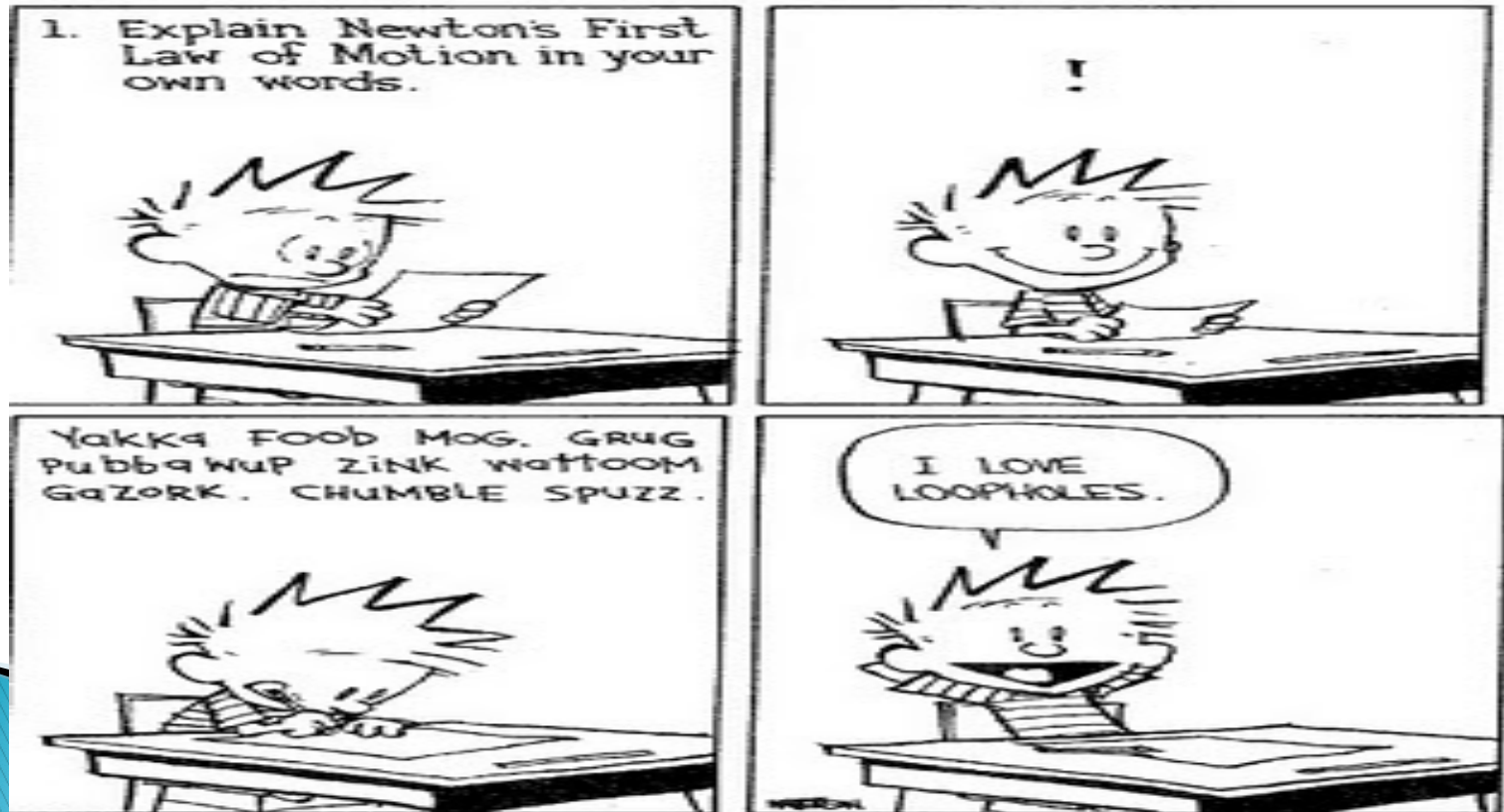
# SEL to the Rescue

- ▶ Responsible Decision Making
- ▶ Self-Awareness
- ▶ Self-Management
- ▶ Social Awareness
- ▶ Relationship Skills



# Responsible Decision Making

- ▶ CASEL defines this as generating, implementing, and evaluating positive and informed solutions to problems, and assuming responsibility for personal decisions and behaviors.



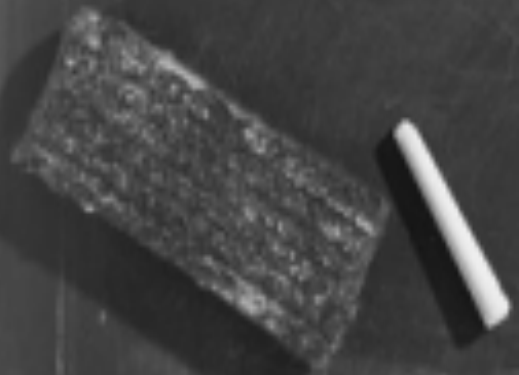
# Decision Making

Consider the opportunities for kids to participate and the variables involved:

- Rewards, incentives, consequences
  - Kids can help co-create as they get older, helps it become more meaningful, and teaches important skills
- Set mindful limits on use of screen time
- Meals
  - Thoughtful (balanced diet, new recipes) vs. impulsive (e.g. fast-food, take out)
- Routines (timeframe, steps, etc.) vs. 'surprise party day'

“The fact is that kids learn to make good decisions by making decisions, not by following directions.”

- Alfie Kohn



[bamradionetwork.com/quotED](http://bamradionetwork.com/quotED)

# For Kids

## Practice:

- How to follow rules, and perhaps participate in making rules
- How to slow down to generate and evaluate possible solutions, how to help
- How to use guiding questions...Is it fair? How will other people feel? Will it work? Is it safe?



# Self-Awareness

CASEL defines this as identifying one's thoughts, feelings and strengths, and recognizing how they influence one's choices and actions.





# Self Awareness for Parents

- ▶ Balancing scheduled vs. flexible plans
  - Example: Vacation can be a stressful time or great opportunity to spend time with relatives they don't often see.





# Self Awareness for Parents

- ▶ Meeting physical and emotional needs
  - Help them build emotional vocabulary. Talk through your own feelings, set the example you want to see.



# Self-Awareness for Kids

- ▶ Identifying emotions
  - Parents can narrate for themselves and the child. *“I notice that...”, “I wonder if...”*
- ▶ Recognizing and celebrating strengths
- ▶ Asking for help when appropriate
  - Know your own limits, don't set yourself up for failure.
- ▶ Increasing confidence
- ▶ Recognizing the effect our behavior has on others
  - *I saw how you shared your toy with Jenny, it really made her happy. I wonder how that made you feel? How do you feel about it thinking about it again now?*
  - Recognizing changes in emotions throughout the day

# Self-Management



- ▶ CASEL defines this as “establishing and working toward short-and long-term goals, and handling emotions so that they facilitate rather than interfere with the task

# Emotional Regulation

- ▶ Breathing—physiological impact on cortisol levels
- ▶ Be Present—demonstrating self-talk and present moment awareness, narrating the shifts in sensations, emotions and thoughts
- ▶ Choose Your Attitude
  - Modeling calm, compassionate responses
  - Start with what is good—practice gratitude
  - As often as possible, start with yes (yes, you noticed that, yes, you're curious about that, yes, that's fun to climb on...but not safe)
- ▶ Know your brain science

# Handy Model of the Brain





# Self-Management for Parents

- ▶ Make peace with what's happening
  - Breathe
  - Lean into what's good—sock story
- ▶ Compassion for you
- ▶ Mindfulness

**You  
alone  
are enough.**

**You  
have  
nothing to  
prove to  
anybody.**

**-maya angelou**



# Self Management for Kids

- ▶ They will practice with:
  - Emotion management —how to identify and label feelings, how to calm down strong feelings;
  - Impulse control —how to wait, how to set goals, and how to solve problems
- ▶ Calming Down
- ▶ Developmentally, they need encouragement and opportunities to practice these skills



# Alternatives to the phrase “CALM DOWN”

- I notice you are having a difficult time...I wonder if you'd let me help you?
- Take a deep breath / Let's take a deep breath
- Want to squeeze my hand?
- Let's count to 10; Math Problems
- If you are feeling sad, you can tell me about it
- Smell the flowers, blow the candles
- Would you like a drink of water?
- Can you stand on one foot?

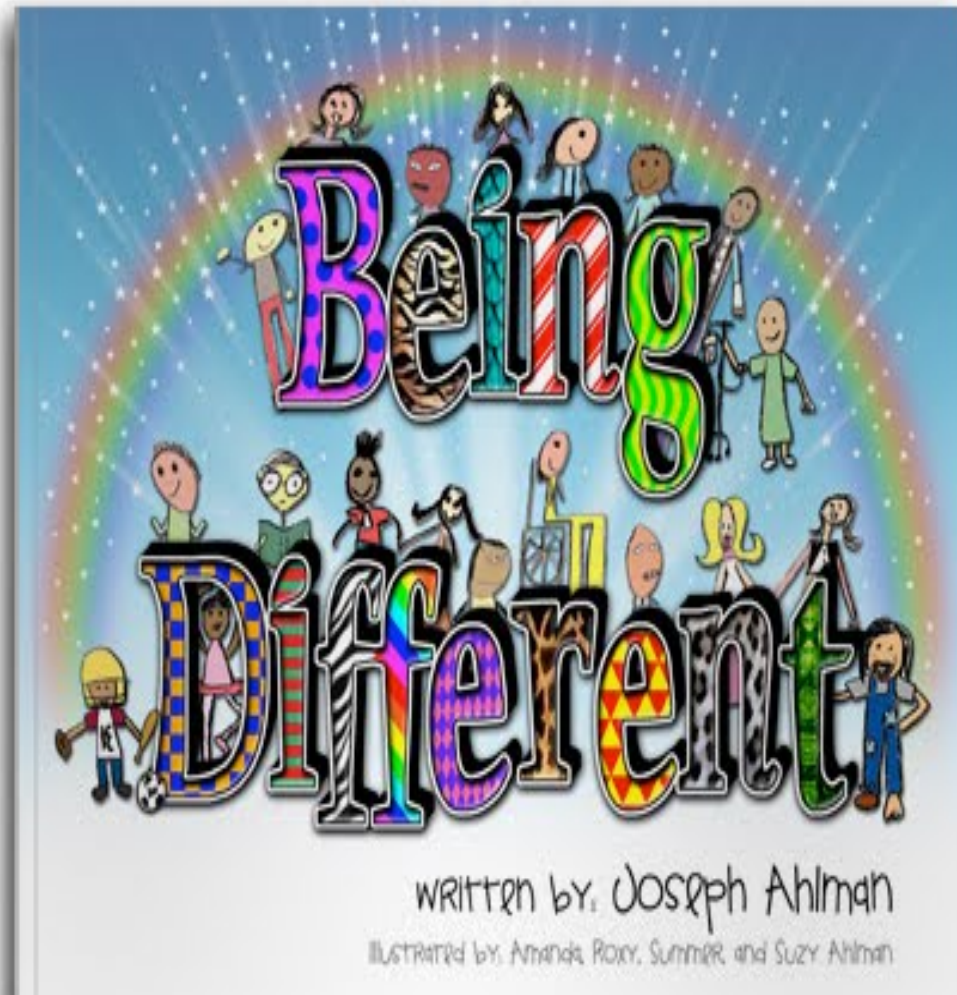


# Social Awareness

CASEL defines this as identifying and understanding the thoughts and feelings of others, respecting their rights and appreciating diversity.

Skills include

- ▶ Perspective taking
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Appreciating others
- ▶ Respect for others



# Social Awareness for Kids

- ▶ People respond differently to the same situation (back to back exercise)
- ▶ Every person deserves kindness and respect
- ▶ We are all valuable and different
- ▶ Realize that there are many ways to do something (rules at home vs. rules at school) and many traditions (celebrations, milestones)
- ▶ They start at Ego-Centrism





# We are aware of others

- ▶ Active listening—identifying and understanding your child's thoughts and feelings
- ▶ Nonverbal cues and communication—"I notice..." and "I wonder..."
- ▶ Make Their Day
  - Nice surprises to show you care (e.g., face paint, leave a note)
- ▶ Be Present
  - Go for a walk and take notice.





# Fostering Social Awareness

- ▶ Friendship
- ▶ Helping others
  - Taking turns, give someone your place in line, volunteer at food pantry.
- ▶ Provide opportunities to observe different cultures
  - Library events
  - Explore and celebrate different cultures

# Relationship Skills

- ▶ CASEL defines this as communication, listening, and negotiation skills to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding connections with individuals and groups

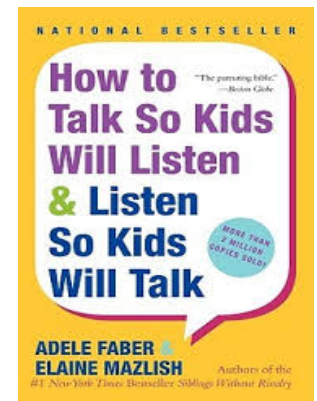
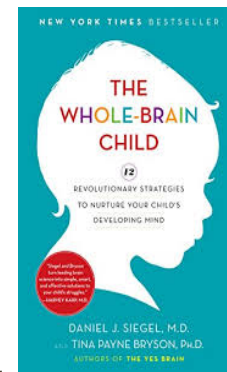


# Kids are developing

- ▶ Abilities to prevent, manage and resolve interpersonal conflicts
  - Using I-statements to express feelings
  - Helping and seeking help
  - Identify bullying behavior
- ▶ Developmentally, it is about establishing and maintaining the relationship—learning to be a friend, how to include others into the friendship, how to say you are sorry when you make a mistake.
  - Building relationships
  - Working cooperatively

# Communication & Connection

- ▶ Relationship skills are about communicating and connecting
  - Be Present, Choose Your Attitude, Listen
- ▶ **These skills are on display all the time**
- ▶ An ideal technique to communicate effectively and achieve connection is called Active Listening
  - Faber & Mazlish. How to Talk so Kids will Listen and Listen so Kids will Talk
  - Dan Siegel. Whole Brain Child



# Fostering Relationship Skills

- ▶ Be part of the adventure, be in the picture
- ▶ Put down the phone
- ▶ Get curious about their games, interests, activities
  - Play games that cause frustration
- ▶ Life (and people) change
  - Friends and interests from last summer may be different than this year, remind kids to keep an open, curious attitude about activities and people.



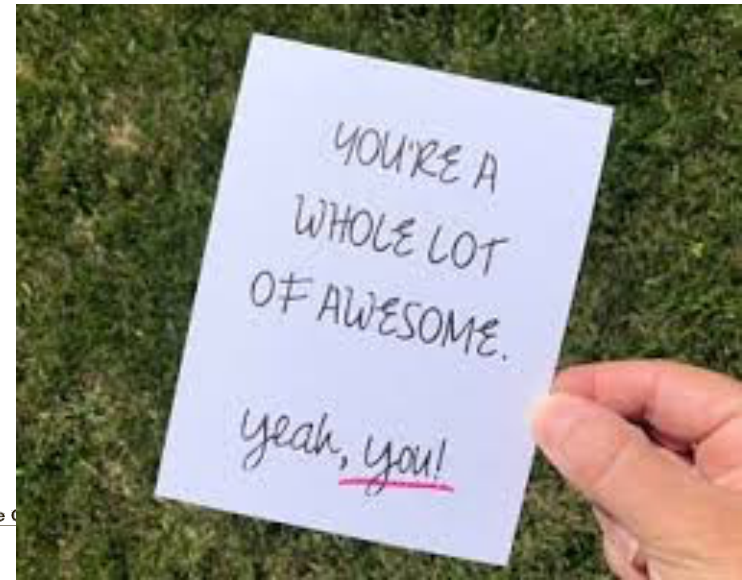
# More Ways to Connect

- ▶ Gottman's bids for emotional connection
  1. Show interest in my accomplishments
  2. Share stories of your day/your life with me
  3. Be affectionate with me
  4. Join me in an adventure
  5. Join me in learning something new
  6. Work on a project with me
  7. Pay attention to what I say
  8. Respond to my joke
  9. Help me relax / have fun



# Here's what helps

- ▶ Know yourself
  - Play to your strengths
  - Take care of your own needs
- ▶ Know your child
  - Concrete needs
  - Emotional needs
  - Social interaction

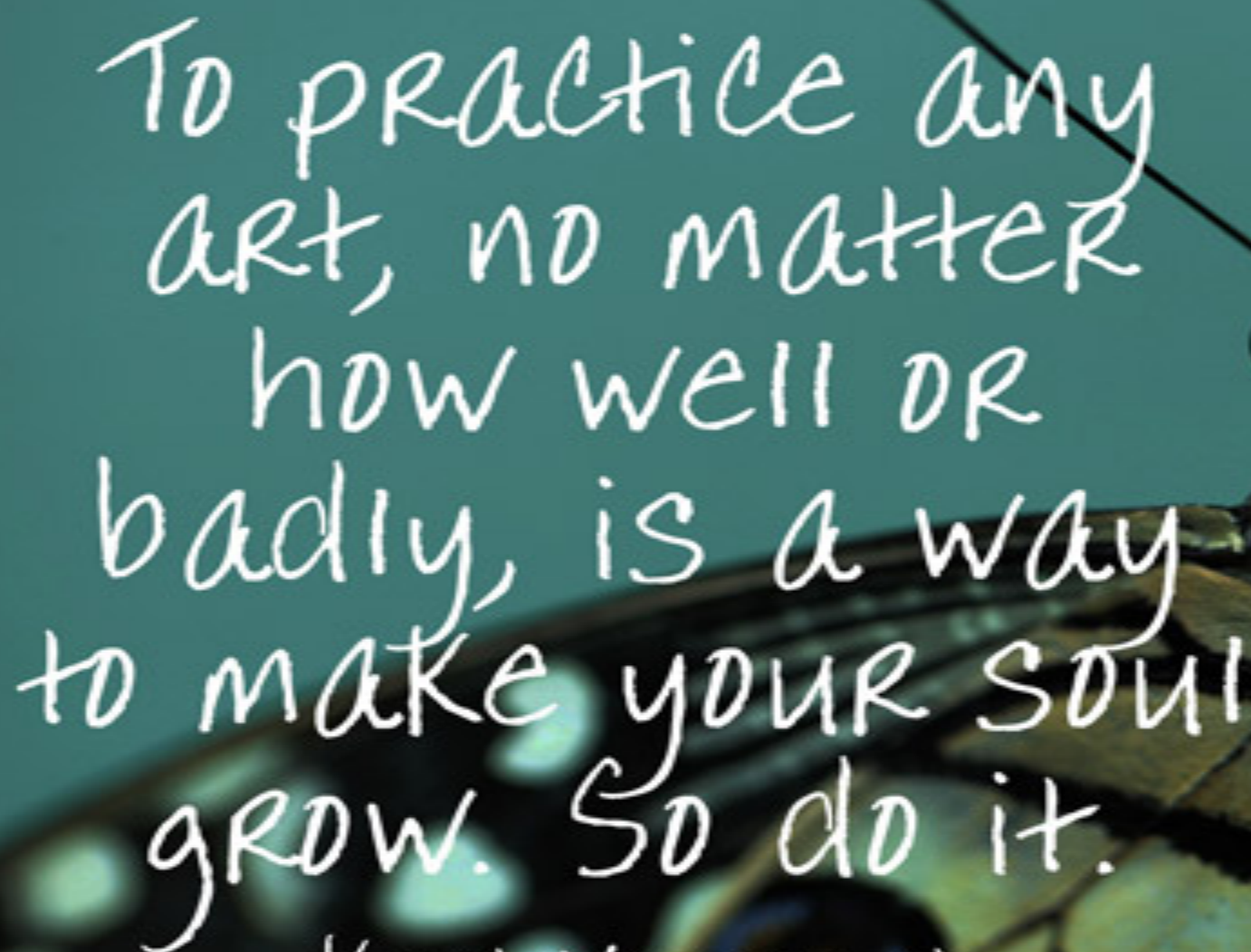


# Tricks and Tips

- ▶ Mindfully regulate screen use
  - Create ‘tech-free’ zones or times of day
  - Be wary of “hook” of screen time
  - Ask them to teach you the game they are playing
  
- ▶ Engage in art together
  - Go to concerts and Museums
    - Museums, Botanic Gardens
    - Millennium Park Summer Music Series, Maggie Daley Park
    - Ravinia kids concerts (or take them to your favorite!)
  - Make crafts, put on talent shows, side-walk art, tell stories (back and forth creation)

# Tricks and Tips

- Read a book together, join the summer reading club at the library
- Check out the Glenview Park District website
- Summer camps
- Involve them in home activities: gardening, cooking, painting, etc.
- Make memories
- Go camping together
- Make simple/every-day things fun
  - Breakfast for dinner, or kids get to cook (with help!)
  - Pajamas all day
  - Family Movie-Night

A monarch butterfly is shown on the right side of the image, its wings partially visible with characteristic orange and black patterns. The background is a solid teal color. Overlaid on the left and center is a quote in a white, handwritten-style font.

To practice any  
art, no matter  
how well or  
badly, is a way  
to make your soul  
grow. So do it.

Kurt Vonnegut



# More Information

- ▶ State Board of Education,  
[http://www.isbe.net/ils/  
social\\_emotional/standards.htm](http://www.isbe.net/ils/social_emotional/standards.htm)
- ▶ CASEL, <http://www.casel.org>

# Questions? Discussion?

