Are we losing the magic of our school summer holidays?

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Summer holidays have changed. In today's tech driven world where playing FortNite is a bigger draw than making friends with the next-door neighbour and playing outside, is there any chance of our children reliving the magical memories of endless sunny days playing in open fields, building dens, climbing trees and 'playing out'?

Recent research has shown that 25% of children are overweight or obese by the age of 7. To tackle this schools are taking positive steps to improve fitness within the curriculum. Instead of braving all weathers for 50 minutes per week to play competitive games of rugby, football or hockey, schools are encouraging active learning, early morning warm-ups and inclusive games during organised PE sessions. However, inactive school holidays are seeing this good work being undone over the summer.

According to Richard Holmes, CEO of a national charity dedicated getting children active, the school holidays are critical in terms of children's health and well-being. "Children are out of school for 40% of the year and a lack of structure can mean weeks of inactivity and hours in front of screens and in some instances, this results in children returning to school less fit and healthy."

The huge increase in screen-time is at the heart of the problem of child inactivity. In 1983 the very first mobile phone went on sale. Fast forward to 2018 and over 20,000 children in the UK alone own a mobile phone by their 6th birthday. Screen time is major part of life, with the average child now spending 5 hours per day on screens. Not only are screens impacting physical health, they're contributing to poor mental health with 10% of school children suffering from a diagnosable mental illness. One factor contributing to this is online bullying, which has increased 50% in the last 3 years thanks to social media. Whereas summer holidays used to give children some respite from bullies, access to technology means the threat from bullies never goes away.

"Cyber bullying affects their everyday lives and is a constant source of distress and worry. With mobile technology being so freely available it is an ongoing issue and one that is relentless. "

Bullying UK

Through its school holiday sports and activity camps, the Kings Foundation is aiming to provide a positive alternative to screens and social media. Their Kings Camps get children active through its programme of accessible, inclusive sports and activities that feature traditional sports and new games designed specifically to benefit mental and physical health, including confidence building games. Kings Camps are a 'screen-free zone' and provide the opportunity for children to be children and free from negative influences.

Richard Holmes is a passionate believer in getting children outdoors and active, "school holidays in the 70's, 80's and even the 90's provided children with a sense of adventure and instilled the importance of getting active outdoors. We know from the hundreds of thousands of children we've worked with over the last two and a half decades that active summers help create active lives. In an age of technology and screens, we mustn't forget the impact our summers had on our own development and provide our own children with the same."

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