

# Parents given formula for stress-free school holidays

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As a child the summer holidays conjure up images of long, school-free fun, but for the majority of parents (62%) they are a source of unwelcome stress in their already busy lives.

New research from children's vitamin brand Bassetts Soft & Chewy also reveals a third (34%) of mums and dads think the holidays are too long and more than a quarter (27%) say they aren't looking forward to their kids being off school at all.

In an effort to lower parental stress over extended periods of time and keep both parents and children happy, experts at Bassetts Soft & Chewy have developed a formula called the 'Fun Quotient' for a perfect, stress-free summer holiday in conjunction with leading child psychologist Laverne Antrobus.

$Sp = [kSc(ta-to)]$

The equation is designed to keep parental stress to a minimum by lowering the stress children experience by organising activities throughout the six-week holiday.

It says that parental stress ( $Sp$ ) is equal to the sum of the stress level of the children ( $Sc$ ), on any given day of the holiday, multiplied by the number of children ( $k$ ) in the household and by the sum of time available ( $ta$ ) minus the time taken up with organised activity ( $to$ , being routine or consistent play activity and meal times etc).

The key to the equation is time – taking into account the number of days within the holiday which are planned (perhaps with a trip away or visiting an attraction) and those which are currently 'empty'. It also looks at the number of children in the household – which can have an impact on stress levels for parents.

Laverne Antrobus explains: "Children experience three periods of transition – before during and after the school holidays. We expect children to be able to adapt from the very structured school routine into the more domesticated home environment and back to school again within a relatively short space of time but this in itself can add to a child's stress as well as a parent's.

"Add this to the huge pressure parents feel to keep their children 'amused' and children's general high expectations and you have a stressful situation which the majority of parents across the country will be able to relate to.

Helen Samways, Brand Manager for Bassetts Soft & Chewy comments: "The formula is meant to be a light-hearted and fun way of looking at a serious issue. To help parents easily work out how stressed they are likely to be in the holidays we've set up the [www.funquotient.co.uk](http://www.funquotient.co.uk) website. As well as calculating stress levels it provides lots of ideas for activities that parents can do with their children over the holidays and is a quick and easy way of organising their time. At least with Bassetts Soft & Chewy vitamins it's easy to give children their daily vitamins in a delicious tasting format that they enjoy which means one less thing for parents to stress about."

Organising your child's time doesn't itself have to be stressful and Laverne recommends working to a calendar to reap the most rewards. Follow these tips to help plan your child's holiday better:

1. Create a calendar to represent the school holidays and put in planned events such as birthdays
2. Create some rules around acceptable bedtimes and getting up in the morning and remember routine is important
3. Encourage everyone to write down activities that include the whole family as well as activities on the list that are low cost like bike riding
4. Make special time with each of your children when you give your child your undivided and uninterrupted attention
5. Offer a mixture of organised activities but make sure that children do have some free time available for 'creative' play. Children need a certain amount of unstructured time to learn to amuse themselves

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Notes to editors:  
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