Let children experience the joy of doing nothing

HOLIDAY time. Time to unwind. Time to relax. Time to stop the overwork and the efficient productivity we have engaged in all year.

Yet, it isn’t easy to slow down and it isn’t easy to stop and do nothing. (But for the sake of research, I am willing to give it a try for a few weeks.)

We live in a world that wants action, that encourages us to engage in the vigorous pursuit of activity and excitement.

We are used to checking phones and emails most moments of the day.

We take our screens to bed with us, and greet them when we wake.

Our technology is ever ready to distract, engage and stimulate.

Rarely do we find time, as Robert Paul Smith wrote, “to do nothing with nobody all alone by ourselves”.

British philosopher Bertrand Russell wrote about the value of doing nothing and the freedom of boredom.

I can’t remember the last time I did absolutely nothing. It actually feels hard to give myself permission to stop being productive.

Yet so much of what I am reading highlights the importance of giving our brains a break, of having downtime, and interacting with little more than our imaginations.

Are your kids complaining they are bored? This is a good thing!

Being bored has many benefits. Rachel Jonat is the writer behind the popular American blog theminimalismom.com and author of the recently released book The Joy of Doing Nothing.

Jonat believes that doing nothing needs to become a regular part of our lives.

It is, she says, a path to greater contentment.

Doing nothing is important for wellness. A lot of experts agree. For health, happiness and wellbeing we need time where we completely unplug and do nothing at all.

Gabrielle Bernstein, New York Times author, believes that when we sit in stillness and do nothing at all, our minds have a chance to recalibrate and we have a chance to reconnect with ourselves.

In Chinese medicine, doing nothing is considered to be a very wise practice. Engaging in times of “non-action” provides space for observation, daydreaming and thoughtful non-reactive decision-making.

Sometimes our busyness and over planning distracts us from living the life we want to live, and simply breeds anxiety. Giving time to doing nothing is an act of self-care.

And, it is an act of caring for our children too. Kids need time to do “not much”.

Having time to just be with their own thoughts and feelings helps them get to know who they are on the inside.

Doing “not much” now will help them be ready for the new school year. It will help them exponentially. Doing nothing now will help them find the energy and focus and efficiency they will need then.

Jonat reminds that doing nothing can lead to relaxing and quality play. It sparks creativity. And doing nothing outside in nature leads to extra wellbeing benefits.

So, here’s to a few weeks of family boredom – of turning off screens and getting outside, of finding stillness and tending our inner worlds, interacting with our creativity, and giving our brains and bodies a break.