

Berrybrook Book Review

Rose Fosdick

15 Minutes Outside, 365 ways to get out of the house and connect with your kids, by Rebecca P. Cohen

Dance classes, swimming lessons, gymnastics, ice-skating lessons, soccer teams, t-ball, baseball, etc. are the current ways parents are involving their children in physical activity. The rate of childhood obesity has increased over the years. Parents are aware of the importance of physical exercise to promote healthy lifestyles. Having your children involved in scheduled activities is a great way to promote great health. But, have you ever thought to make your life simple and have your children play outside? The author, Rebecca P. Cohen, of the book, *15 Minutes Outside, 365 ways to get out of the house and connect with your kids*, has done exactly that. She discovered that if she set aside at least 15 minutes per day to engage in an outdoor activity with her children, everyone would benefit.

She made a decision after walking outdoors on a brisk day with her two boys, that there was so much physical activity in playing outdoors, and so much to learn from nature, that she now spends a part of everyday outdoors with them. She has discovered in doing so, that her family has become closer, more relaxed, communicates better, and the physical activity comes in forms of just sheer fun!

As I was reading her book, I was reminded of what we do here at Berrybrook. We spend a good amount of time, daily, outdoors. We take walks in the woods, roll down hills, discover various critters living under rocks and woodchips, run, jump, swing, climb, observe changes in seasons, observe trees and plants, watch birds, all of which are some of the suggestions from her book.

The book is full of outdoor activities and it is broken down into months. Cohen has provided lists of activities for each month, and they are all described in detail. They are very simple activities that any family can do. The idea is to get outside with your children every day, no matter the weather. She suggests bundling up in the winter, or putting on rain coats and rain boots in the rain and heading outdoors, even if it is for only 15 minutes. She has found that through the time spent outdoors, her children have learned things and experienced things that are invaluable. They have learned to see exercise as a fun part of life, by doing activities involving the use of their muscles in a natural and fun way.

There are so many great ideas in this book, that I cannot list them all but feel that it is a book worth reading and keeping. You can easily find something to do outdoors every day of every month, regardless of the weather. I also liked her idea of keeping a bag packed by the door with supplies needed for outdoors. She would change the supplies according to the season, but it was always there and ready to go. She also kept a set of cards with activities on them in the bag. You could keep her book in the bag too!

Although scheduled activities are wonderful for the children, just think how easy it would be to head outdoors and play every day! You could even think of it as your scheduled activity for the day! Spending time with your children engaged in their play, as an active participant, will benefit their physical health and yours. Not to mention, it is great for everyone's mental health too!