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JUNE 2017

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STEP 2

Play

The best part about introducing kids to the outdoors? The fun!

4-7

Your kids are old enough to remember this. Make some magic.

HOW FAR CAN THEY GO?

2-5 miles

DO THIS

Tell a great campfire story. It doesn't have to be scary. Use a rotating cast of camping superheroes or magical fairies with outdoors-relevant powers; save these characters for outdoor trips.

Give them a job. Kids this age are eager to feel like they're helping. Let them pull out the sleeping bags, assist with the tent, or find some marshmallow sticks for later.

Bring a friend. "Should your kid have an emotional breakdown, it's nice to have another caregiver there to help," says Jeff Alt, author of *Get Your Kids Hiking*. Or go with a group, like your local chapter of Hike It Baby (hikeitbaby.com).

KEY GEAR

Small daypack Offer light items like water, snacks, or a jacket, but let children choose what they want to carry.

Sneakers Boots are important in rough conditions. But for light loads on dry trails, sneakers are sufficient. Splurge on some quality wool/synthetic socks to ensure comfy feet.

Teddy bears Pack comfort items to make the tent feel more like home.

Sweets and treats Whatever your rules about junk food at home, consider loosening them on the trail. Yes, bribery. There's almost nothing a kid won't do for a Snickers—including hiking uphill.

ON THE MENU

Crowd-pleasers. Skip unfamiliar freeze-dried foods and recreate favorite meals your kid eats at home, like quesadillas or mac 'n' cheese. The goal? You want your child to associate hiking and camping with full bellies and tasty food.

! TROUBLESHOOT THIS FEARS

There's a lot of darkness and a lot of noises when camping. Talk to your kids about what scares them, and give them concrete things to do if they see a bear (don't run) or a snake (don't touch).

PHOTOS BY (FROM LEFT) KRISTAL WEIR PHOTOGRAPHY / HIKEITBABY.COM; IMGORHAND / ISTOCK.COM; COURTESY (7)

ADVENTURES IN PARENTING

Rules, Shmoolz

Some parenting dogma is made for breaking and the backcountry is the place to do it. *By Leslie Hsu Oh*

A T THE TOE of the Root Glacier in Alaska's Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, my young children strapped on crampons. While 5-year-old Kyra, already in her spikes, tried to catch white wisps of a dryas seedhead drifting in a breeze fresh off the glaciers, my husband tightened adult instep crampons on our 2-year-old, Ethan.

We are an adventurous family, but even so, I knew that things could go horribly wrong when a toddler is toddling around on ice with knives attached to his feet. While there may not be rules specifically against this, it's definitely not in the parenting handbook. But it's not that we're reckless, it's that we—well, I—believe that the risks are worth it. Life is packed with rules, and kids may feel like the whole point is to learn the "right" way to behave. I wanted—and still want—for my kids to think the outdoors is a place where they can test the boundaries of conventional wisdom.

On the moraine, it was hard not to feel doubt in the slow chaos of ice, rocks, and silt in a landscape torn apart by forces beyond human. Before we had time to second-guess taking kids onto this col-

lision zone between two glaciers, Kyra took off up the slick sides of the ice field. Ethan tried to follow and tripped. I nearly choked.

He picked himself up before I reached him, joining Kyra beside a puddle of water the same blue as the sky. Kyra jumped in and stomped as if she were barefoot in a tub of grapes. Clink. Clink. Clink.

Life is packed with rules, and kids can feel like the whole point is to learn the "right" way to behave.

Behind her, beneath a 7,000-foot vertical wall of ice, water carved the glacier surface into ravines and shafts called moulines. The kids laughed and played. But for the briefest moment, I regretted bringing the kids. There were grander things I could do here without them, safer things I could do with them. But then, I would not have seen these natural phenomena through a child's eyes, a window that's only open for a few innocent years. I would never have sprawled belly first on ice, giggling as the four of us slurped glacier water through bright red Twizzlers.

And they would never be able to show their friends photos of their tiny bodies bent against such extremes, our family balanced with one foot on each side of a deep crevasse, broken rules laying in shambles under our spiked feet. ■

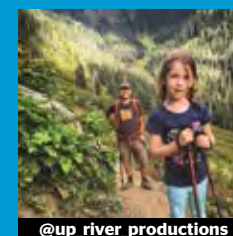
Making Memories



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We asked our Instagram followers what their family camping trips look like. Their smiles are contagious. Add your images to the conversation with the hashtag #BPFamilyHike.

FUN & GAMES

My 5-year-old loves scavenger hunts. We write up a list of items to find (not collect): a white feather, a yellow butterfly, etc.

—Damian McArthur



I got my kids cameras and let them shoot whatever they wanted.

Made for slow going sometimes, but they loved it. It's amazing to see the trip through their eyes.

—Kelley Ziegler

GEAR

No Child Left Inside

AGES 2-8

Nalgene On The Fly Kids 12 oz.

Want your kid to stay hydrated? Get a water bottle he or she will love to use, like these BPA-free vessels with playful designs (ranging from sea creatures to Marvel Comics characters). "It became my daughter's favorite hiking companion," says one parent. **Smart:** The swing-away cap kept the mouthpiece clean when the bottle inevitably fell in the dirt. \$12; 4 oz.; nalgene.com



AGES 2-10

Fire Buggz Fishing Pole Campfire Roaster

Sure, any whittled stick will do, but this roaster turns campfire cooking into a game. Designed like a fishing pole (dangle your hot dogs or marshmallows over the fire), it lets kids pretend to land a lunker while keeping their hands away from the flames. \$23; 11 oz.; firebuggz.com



AGES 4-12

Vasque Breeze III Ultradry

These pint-sized kicks feature the same waterproof/breathable uppers that Vasque's adult models use. The meshy fabric dissipates sweat, and a proprietary UltraDry membrane kept testers' feet dry during puddle-hopping adventures. "My daughter loved using these as a depth gauge for puddles," says one tester. **Bonus:** The tough toecap resists scuffs, making these boots hand-me-down durable. \$70; 1 lb. 6 oz. (toddler size 13); toddler 10-kids 6; vasque.com