Sometimes less really **IS** more

Too much month, not enough money. Sound familiar? Places to go, but can't afford the gas. Too true – especially these days.

It seems we're all learning how to make do with less. And that's not always a bad thing. Hard times, lean times demand resourcefulness and resiliency. But families that lived through the Depression Era of the 1930s often reminisce about the fun they had growing up – in spite of lack of money and other things. Pick up ball games, outdoor activities, Victory Gardens, on and on.

Making do. Can you do that and still have fun? Especially with your kids?

Part of the fun is finding clever ways to keep active and involved. When the day is done, you might discover you've spent more quality time and learned more about your family than you expected. Spending time together as a family is one of the best ways to keep kids from getting involved in risky behaviors. Kids will learn about family values and family history; you'll learn even more about these young people who are growing up. Years from now – heck, maybe even next week – you'll remember the fun you had.

Yes, less can be more. Stretch summer's fun with little or no money:

1. Family game nights: They are simple and easy. Pick a variety of games, or have different people select the game for the week. They don't have to be expensive. A deck of cards and you're good to go – Crazy 8's, Hearts, Euchre, Bridge, War, Go Fish ... on and on. Other game

Croquet and other outdoor activities are great inexpensive

favorites: Cribbage, Dominoes, Chess, Checkers, Charades, Scrabble, Crossword puzzles.

2. Croquet: Fire up the croquet mallets; this yard game can occupy hours navigating through the traditional course or adding special requirements at each hoop – recite a poem, complete a math problem, etc. Horseshoes, Corn Hole, Bocce Ball, Badminton and Volleyball are other great yard games.

3. Plays and skits: Have kids create one and stage it for friends and family; they'll learn teamwork, script writing, acting, stage and set design, publicize so they have a good crowd. Help them prepare easy, low-cost snacks for those attending.

4. Watch the sunset: We often forget Lorain County is poised on the edge of Lake Erie – prime coastline for sunsets, but no matter where you live, the sun always sets in the west, so grab a chair and watch nature's artwork wow you.

5. Carpool: When you want to head out to an activity, take turns driving with friends, neighbors, classmates; you can switch off places to drive to or contribute money to defray gas costs. You'll have more fun as a group and save money, too.

6. Get outdoors: Hike, bike, swim, walk. You'll be wondering why you didn't in less than six months when the cold weather comes.

7. Potluck: Hold a neighborhood potluck and have everyone bring copies of their recipe to share; when the night is over, you'll have your own personal recipe collection from a fun evening.

8. Tell Stories: From times long ago, we find comfort in sharing our stories; make a campfire, roast some hot dogs, make S'mores and tell stories – these will survive the generations and years from now your kids will be telling them around the campfire – they'll be glad they heard them from you.

9. Learn something new: Set a goal to learn something new by the end of the summer; learn to whistle, stand on your head, hula hoop, swim, juggle, sing, knit, golf, garden ... the list is endless; at the end of the summer have a neighborhood talent show.

10. Eat together: Again, one of the best ways to bond and protect your kids from risky behaviors. Pick out a recipe, shop for the ingredients (pick them from the garden if you have one); cook together and have fun devouring the fruits of your labor.

Simple is sometimes best. It seems to stand the test of time. Communities That Care of Lorain County, a countywide coalition working to prevent substance abuse, supports creative ways to have fun and build memories. Share your ideas on how to live thrifty while having fun with family and friends. Friend us on Facebook.