

It's hard work trying to be a fun parent

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Monday, 08 July 2013 16:54 -



There are worse ways to start a Monday morning. (Diane Stamm | The Wauneta Breeze)

By Diane Stamm

The Wauneta Breeze

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Looking back at a time before I had kids, I remember thinking of all the fun stuff I would do with my kids.

Trying to line up coaches for YMCA youth leagues, I knew I wanted to coach my kids' teams and practice with them at home.

Living on a farm our vacations were spur of the moment affairs. We had several when we didn't have plans for the next day but caught an inch of rain overnight and took off for the mountains in the morning.

Growing up, we could never get enough of camping. We lived five miles from Harry Strunk Lake, but with irrigation water to be changed morning and night we were lucky to spend a night at the lake each summer.

I was going to do these things and more with my kids.

And then I had kids.

Suddenly an overnight camping trip didn't have the same appeal when I was the one to pack, unpack, pack and unpack once more.

By this time last summer my husband had taken our daughter and son fishing and camping several times. It hasn't worked out that way this year.

With the prospect of a cool week and zero chance of rain I decided to take the kids to spend a night at Rock Creek.

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Sunday evening we loaded up and headed out with them poking and prodding and fighting all the way to Parks.

We made it to Rock Creek with only one potty break and three or four threats of "Do you want me to turn this car around!"

Finding our favorite spot the kids launched themselves out of the pickup. My daughter headed for the fishing poles, declaring they learned how to fish at SCORE camp and she could do it herself.

As she went digging through the cooler for the worms I turned, looking for my son. He was already thigh deep in the lake without a life jacket. Dragging him from the water I found my daughter had indeed baited her own hook, but had about ten feet of line tangled in lily pads and cat tails.

While I tried to untangle her, my son grabbed a net and was once again shorts deep in the water trying to snag anything dumb enough to have not been scared off.

Depositing him in the pickup, I pitched the tent and started organizing sleeping gear.

Coming out of the tent I followed the trail of marshmallows from the cooler back to the lake where my daughter sat, eating marshmallows and chocolate bars and flopping her fishing pole around like she was beating snakes.

Surprisingly, she had yet to get a nibble even though she knew her hook still had a worm on because she'd checked it twice in five minutes.

As the evening wore on and the sun started to set, we started getting ready for bed. By this time the sounds of humans had diminished, everyone around the lake had heard enough racket coming from our camp ground to know the fish weren't going to be biting.

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I had packed them both pajamas but was unprepared to find that both had failed to wear underwear.

With a sigh I got them in their pajamas and tucked into their sleeping bags then went out sit by the fishing poles and listen to the giggling that was going on in the tent.

Finally things quieted down and I decided it was time for me to go to bed.

I don't remember camping hurting so bad when I was young. These days everything aches when I camp: shoulders, elbows, hips, knees and ankles.

I had been down ten minutes when a pickup with an exhaust system that echoed around the lake pulled in 100 yards up the lake. Laughter and music and yelling followed for the next hour until the pickup started with a roar and left.

Finally settling down to sleep I awoke at 2:30 by rain drops falling on the tent.

So much for zero chance of rain. I got up, put on the rain fly and crawled damply into bed, thankful that the kids rolled over and went back to sleep.

My son demanding to watch cartoons woke me at 6:00.

The kids sat, eating soggy powdered donuts, as I packed up our wet tent and crammed everything back into the pickup. By 7:00 we were on our way home.

I didn't feel like a fun mom. I hope that time adds fuzziness to the kids' memories of the trip and

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they remember the fun things, not the tangled lines, not my frustration with a half bag of marshmallows dumped on the ground,

Even though I swore on the ride home that we aren't going camping again ever, I hope time adds fuzziness to my memories and I remember the fun things about the trip and am willing to try and be a fun mom again soon.

Just not for a couple weeks. I really need to recover.