

**Yoga:** Children may not be able to perform the same workout as you, but you will still be promoting a healthy lifestyle to them if they are around you while you are doing it. Yoga helps with flexibility, stress relief, and is a healthy form of exercise.

**Adult Recreation:** Research **local recreation centers** to find classes and activities offered for adults. Child care is often provided during adult classes. Try these local organizations:

- o Parks & Recreation
- o YMCA
- o Michigan Athletic Club

Also, try visiting these **educational and historic places** in Michigan and surrounding areas:

- o Detroit Institute of Art
- o Frederik Meijer Garden & Sculpture Park
- o Detroit Science Center
- o Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village
- o Cedar Point Amusement Park
- o Detroit Zoo, Toledo Zoo, & Binder Park Zoo
- o Great Lakes Naval Memorial and Museum

Visit [www.michigan.gov](http://www.michigan.gov) to locate more travel, educational, and recreational activities! Also visit [www.michigan.org](http://www.michigan.org) to find additional attractions specific to children.

Evenson RJ, Simon RW. Clarifying the Relationship Between Parenthood and Depression. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. December 2005.

For more information, contact:

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School of Social Work  
**Kinship Care Resource Center**  
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East Lansing, MI 48824

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# Recreational Activities

## FOR CHILDREN

### AND

# Stress Relievers

## FOR CAREGIVERS

## AND CHILDREN

MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

KINSHIP CARE  
RESOURCE CENTER

*Strengthening Families ♦ Spanning Generations*

# Recreational Activities FOR CHILDREN

## YMCA – Young Men’s Christian Association

**General description:** The mission of the YMCA is to put Christian principles into practice through year-round programs that build a healthy mind, body, and spirit for all. The YMCA seeks to motivate children to learn and encourages a commitment to service.

**Activities provided:** Most YMCAs offer swimming lessons, drug abuse prevention programs, summer camps, youth sports teams, leadership programs for teenagers, and art classes. The YMCA is also the largest child care provider in the United States.

**Age requirement:** Programs and/or child care are available for all ages.

**Program duration:** Duration of the sessions vary widely. Some activities are drop-in, summer camps may be day camps or last for several weeks, and other programs may be seasonal.

**Cost:** Membership costs and programs offered vary depending on which YMCA you attend, but the cost for a child 0-18 may be between \$15-\$20 a month. About 20% of the children in child care programs are given financial assistance. Grants are also available to help with the cost of membership.

**Location:** YMCAs are located throughout Michigan.

**Contact information:** To find a YMCA in your area, visit [www.ymca.net](http://www.ymca.net) or call (800) 872-9622.



**Drawing:** Art is a great way for not only children, but also adults to express themselves. The next time your children are coloring, sit down with them and create a picture.

**Social support:** Do fun things with your friends and their children. Playdates like this will help your children create new friendships, and they will help you maintain your own friendships. This will give you time to talk with other caregivers, receive advice, or just catch up.

**Writing:** This is a great activity that will help a stressed caregiver express feelings and frustrations. Older children can write in a journal while you write in yours. Younger children can have their own journal to draw pictures or practice their letters. This is a wonderful activity as a routine before bedtime.

**Gardening:** Keep a small garden, whether it’s a flower garden outside or an indoor herb garden. It will teach the children responsibility to help you maintain it, and it will give you a sense of satisfaction when you see the fruits of your labor.

**Pets:** Pets are great companions, can increase your mood, help you to exercise, and are good listeners! Pets provide fun activity for children, teach them to care for others, and are another way to teach responsibility.



**Stay organized:** Keep a calendar at home to organize the family's commitments. Create a chart for the children to remember and keep track of their chores. This also helps to divide work evenly. Always put bills to be paid in the same spot and mark the envelope with their due date or put it on the calendar. Once you find a system of organization at home that works for you, you will need to keep track of fewer appointments and reminders in your head.

**Meditation:** Whether silently at home or in the form of prayer at your local church, meditation is a great way to clear your mind. Find a comfortable space, listen to relaxing music, and sit quietly for 15 minutes.

**Massage:** Rub pressure points on your neck, head, hands, and arms to relieve tension. If appropriate, involve your children to help them relieve stress too by creating a massage train. Each person massages the hand of the person next to him or her for a few minutes.



## Big Brothers Big Sisters of America

**General description:** Big Brothers Big Sisters matches children with an adult to form a mentor relationship.

**Activities provided:** "Bigs" and "Littles" meet weekly to talk, do activities together, work on school work, and get to know one another. School-based and community-based mentoring is available depending on the need of the child.

**Age requirement:** Children ages 6 to 18.

**Program duration:** Matches can be made all year. Bigs and Littles meet for at least one hour per week.

**Cost:** There is no cost to enroll a child to be a Little Brother or Sister.

**Location:** Big Brothers Big Sisters programs can be found throughout Michigan.

**Contact information:** To find the local agency that matches Bigs and Littles in your area, visit [www.bbbs.org](http://www.bbbs.org) or call (215) 567-7000.

## Boys and Girls Club of America

**General description:** The Boys and Girls Club programs and services promote and enhance the development of boys and girls by encouraging competence, usefulness, belonging, and influence. Boys and Girls Clubs offers a safe environment with caring adult professionals where children can learn, grow, and develop strong character.

**Activities provided:** Programs offered include drug, alcohol, and pregnancy prevention, sports teams, music and art classes, tutoring, hygiene awareness, Internet safety, leadership development, and much more.

**Age requirement:** The majority of children involved in Boys and Girls Clubs are ages 7 to 18; a small percentage are younger than 7.

**Program duration:** The Clubs are open every day, after school and on weekends and are often based in a building dedicated solely to children's activities.

**Cost:** Membership dues are \$5-\$10 per year.

**Location:** Boys and Girls Clubs are located in major cities throughout Michigan.

**Contact information:** To find a Boys and Girls Club, visit [www.bgca.org/clubs](http://www.bgca.org/clubs) or call 1-800-854-2582.

## Boy Scouts of America

**General description:** The mission of the Boy Scouts of America is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices.

**Activities provided:** Cub Scouts is designed for boys ages 7 to 10 and involves activities such as sports, hiking, fishing, science, swimming, and camping. Boy Scouts is available for boys ages 11 to 17 and involves more challenging outdoor activities and camping. Venturing is an additional program for young men ages 14 to 20 involving activities such as performing a play or climbing a mountain. Boy Scouts of America also offers summer camps.

**Age requirement:** Boys ages 7 to 20.

**Program duration:** Year round.

**Cost:** Weekly and monthly dues vary in cost depending on the program. Scouts also pay for their own uniforms, handbooks, and camps.

**Location:** Scouting Councils exist throughout Michigan.

**Contact information:** For more information, please visit [www.scouting.org](http://www.scouting.org).



# Stress Relievers

## FOR CAREGIVERS AND CHILDREN

**Take a power nap:** A quick 10 to 30 minute nap will recharge you more than you think. If your children go down for an afternoon nap, catch one yourself also!

**Breathing techniques:** Slow, deep breaths will lower your heart rate and make you feel more relaxed. Breathing in a paper bag when extremely distressed or nervous will also help calm you down.

**Exercise:** Physical activity releases endorphins in the brain, a substance that makes you feel good, relieves tension, and acts as a painkiller. Taking a walk with your children to a park and playing an outside game with them are both great ways to get exercise and spend time with the children. If the children are young, push them in a stroller.

**Fresh air:** Try eating your lunch at work outside or enjoy dinner in your backyard. The outside environment will be refreshing, and good weather may put you in a better mood. A simple picnic or barbecue will be a fun change of scenery for both you and your children.



## St. Francis Camp on the Lake

**General description:** St. Francis Camp believes that mentally impaired children should have the right to experience life to its fullest.

**Activities Provided:** This program teaches campers life skills such as socialization skills, personal hygiene, and other daily chores. Additionally, the camp plans activities to meet each child's skill level with programs, including sports, swimming, boating, hiking, dancing, singing, and caring for camp pets.

**Age requirement:** All ages.

**Program duration:** One week.

**Cost:** The cost of the camp is \$450; financial assistance is available.

**Location:** Jerome, Michigan.

**Contact information:** More information can be found at [www.saintfranciscamp.org](http://www.saintfranciscamp.org), by calling 517-688-9212, or by emailing [mike\\_carp@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mike_carp@sbcglobal.net).

## Van Buren Youth Camp

**General description:** Van Buren Youth Camp strives to provide campers a quality camp experience at a reasonable cost.

**Activities Provided:** Camp programs including talent shows, sports, swimming, arts and crafts, dancing, and boating.

**Age requirement:** Ages 6 to 18.

**Program duration:** Camp sessions are usually one week, except for the youngest age group, which is 3 days.

**Cost:** Camp cost for the youngest age group is \$90 and for all other age groups is \$250.

**Location:** Between Kalamazoo and Lake Michigan.

**Contact information:** For more information, visit [www.vbyc.org](http://www.vbyc.org), call 269-521-3855, or email [mail@vbyc.org](mailto:mail@vbyc.org).

Camps run from mid-June to mid-August and are separated by the age of the campers:

Pre-Early Youth: Ages 6-8	Early Youth: Ages 8-11
Middle Youth: Ages 11-14	Late Youth: 13-16
Early Leadership: 12-14	High School: 14-18

## Girl Scouts of America

**General description:** The Girl Scouts of America make it their goal to provide a nurturing environment for all girls where they can learn life skills and build character.

**Activities provided:** Girl Scout programs focus on community outreach, leadership, environmental awareness, the arts, science, and health. Daisy Girl Scouts is for ages 5 and 6, Brownie Girl Scouts is for ages 6 to 8, Junior Girl Scouts is for ages 8 to 11, and Studio 2B is for girls 11 to 17 years old.

**Age requirement:** Girls 5 to 17 years old.

**Program duration:**

Year round.

**Cost:** Weekly and monthly dues vary in cost depending on the program.

**Location:** Girl Scout troops are located throughout Michigan.

**Contact information:**

For more information, please call 800-478-7248 or visit [www.girlscouts.org/councilfinder/](http://www.girlscouts.org/councilfinder/).



## Michigan 4-H Youth Development

**General description:** Michigan 4-H is committed to providing opportunities that will help children make friends, work as a team, learn in a safe environment, learn about diversity, and grow into a responsible citizen.

**Activities provided:** Michigan 4-H coordinates events, programs, community service, and scholarships for children.

**Age requirement:** Ages 5 to 19 years old.

**Program duration:** Year round.

**Cost:** The annual participation fee is \$10, and local 4-H clubs may charge a small membership fee to meet their goals.

**Location:** 4-H programs exist in all 83 counties in Michigan.

**Contact information:** Michigan 4-H Youth Development can be reached at 517-432-7575, [msue4h@msu.edu](mailto:msue4h@msu.edu) or <http://web1.msue.msu.edu/cyf/youth/index.html>.

## Camp Grace Bentley

**General description:** Camp Grace Bentley is a summer camp for special needs children. Past campers have had special needs such as cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism, and spina bifida.

**Activities provided:** The camp gives children the opportunity to be themselves and receive special assistance in order to participate in typical summer camp activities, such as arts and crafts, talent shows, swimming, games, plays, and sports

**Age requirement:** Ages 6 to 17 years old.

**Program duration:** This is an overnight camp that holds 4 sessions during the summer, each of which is 9 days long.

**Cost:** \$400 for each 9-day session.

**Location:** The camp is located on Lake Huron, about 90 minutes north of Detroit.

**Contact information:** For more information, visit [www.campgracebentley.org](http://www.campgracebentley.org), email [campgrace@hotmail.com](mailto:campgrace@hotmail.com), or call 313-962-8242. Registration materials and camp applications can be found online.



## Spring Hill Camp

**General description:** A Christian-based summer camp, Spring Hill offers many options for day camps and overnight camps, depending on the age of the child.

**Activities Provided:** Spring Hill keeps overnight campers busy all day with crafts, swimming, a zip line, wall climbing, campfires, community service, paintball, high ropes courses, and live music.

**Age requirement:** Children in grades 1 through 12.

**Program duration:** The length of the overnight camps depends on age but ranges from 5 days to two weeks.

**Cost:** \$190 to \$655. Financial assistance is available by filling out a financial aid request form on the Spring Hill website.

**Location:** Overnight camps are located in Evart, Michigan. The day camps are held in many areas, including Novi, Auburn Hills, Southfield, Brighton, Rockford, Plymouth, Farmington Hills, and Grand Rapids.

**Contact information:** For more information, visit [www.springhillcamps.com/MI](http://www.springhillcamps.com/MI), email [register@springhillcamps.com](mailto:register@springhillcamps.com), or call 231-734-2616.

Name of Camp	Education Level Completed	Overnight Camp Fee	Day Camp Fee
Storybrook	Grades 1-3	\$280-\$485	\$190/week
Copper Country	Grades 4-6	\$335-\$575	\$190/week (only 4th grade)
New Frontiers	Grades 6-9	\$375-\$655	N/A
TST	Grades 9-12	\$230-\$450	N/A

Please note the day camps are only offered to children who have completed up to fourth grade. Spring Hill can accommodate children with special needs also.