Tearing your kids away from the TV

In days gone by, the arrival of winter—and all of its exciting activities—was looked forward to, even celebrated. But in recent years a large number of people dread the chilliest season. So much so, in fact, that it's starting to rub off on our kids: many would prefer to ignore the cold outside world and snuggle up to the warmth of a TV set or computer. The tips below will help you root out baby couch potatoes and help the whole family rediscover winter fun.



Create a winter tradition. Whether it's skating every Saturday, an annual sleigh ride, or just walking the dog in the park every night, plan an activity that the whole family does together during the winter months.

Encourage involvement. From scouts and guides, to skating lessons; youth groups to volunteer work, most communities offer indoor and outdoor after school or evening activities that are fun, educational and can occupy children during those 'February blah' evenings.

Introduce winter sports. Even if you've never skied or skated in your life, there's no reason why you can't encourage your children to learn. Take lessons together if you're brave enough. Or try out activities that require less co-ordination—and are a little less treacherous to inflexible adults—like snow-shoeing or tobogganing.

Limit TV and computer time. Though it may not be reasonable to expect your kids to go TV and Internet free, you should set limits on what they watch and how long they watch it for.

Teach them to curl up with a good book if it's too cold to set foot outside. It will help warm up imaginations and improve language skills. Studies also show that kids who love reading tend to do better at school.

Be a role model. Chances are, if you haven't left the sofa since December, neither have your children. Kids learn lifestyle habits by mimicking their parents. Show your children that winter isn't about watching television and eating bundt cake. Stay active and get involved: goalkeep on the road hockey team, build a snowman, or play a board game with your children.

By bundling up the kids and braving the cold outdoors together, you'll feel more connected as a family and more alert and healthy during the groggy month of February. You may even rediscover why people loved winter all those years ago.