

Camping In...

The first cold front always puts me in a good mood. The crisp, clean feel of sixty degree air rejuvenates each morning. Each passing year, as the kids grow, I learn to appreciate the coming months more and more. Hunting season, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas all get a little more exciting as the kids start to anticipate what's around the corner.

A few days back, in a moment of lapse judgment, I suggested to the kids that the weather might be ripe for a campout in the backyard. My plan was met with great enthusiasm, such that I was unable to backtrack once I realized what I was in for. After setting up the tent, I quickly realized that a dad, a two year old girl, and a four year old boy just cannot get comfortable in a one-man tent shaped like a shark. I ignored the look of, "I told you so," from Mom and soldiered on.

As the sun set, old Dad spent a bit of time preparing the fire for the smores. Recent rains made fire starting slow and a bit smoky. Mom observed the scene with camera in one hand and wine glass in the other. All the while, the kids were off playing Nerf darts in the shark tent.

After sending smoke signals to all surrounding neighbors, the fire finally settled to coals and the marshmallow roast began. Actually, Dad roasted marshmallows and a few arm hairs while the kids made quick work of the other ingredients. Smores were constructed, but it seemed none were being consumed. The chocolate had disappeared rapidly.

Bedtime soon arrived and it was discovered that a few extra inhabitants were enjoying the tent. Somewhere along the way, the tent flap had been left wide open. The glow of two toddler size lanterns managed to attract quite a stir from the bug kingdom. The shark had literally been taken over by a swarm of hungry mosquitoes. Short of setting off a bug bomb, we were now without shelter. The mysterious appearance of the swarm may never be solved, but Dad now had an excuse to sleep inside.

Alternate plans were formed and a makeshift campground was constructed on the living room floor, complete with a comfy air mattress, climate control, and no stinging bugs. The kids were not disappointed as we were up way past bedtime and a movie was in view of the campground. Wrestling and joking commenced, as the chocolate was far from wearing off. Somewhere along the way, we all drifted off to sleep.

In the early morning hours, I woke up, sleeping on the cold, tile floor. There was not a kid to be found. After a little panicked investigation, it was discovered one child went to her own bed and the other was smart enough to climb onto the couch when the air let out of the now deflated air mattress. Two percenters...they must have gotten their brains from Mom. No worries, Dad snuck back to his room for a bit of restful sleep in a real, soft bed.

Just as I got comfortable and began to nod off, I heard the usual morning wake-up; "Dada...Dada...want juice...good morning...want snack...love you." A new day had begun. Sleep would have to wait. Thank God for coffee.

Until next week, keep smiling.

-Comments can be sent to Drs. Parrish through www.ParrishDental.com.