

**By Jen Lambert, CPC**

During a recent conversation with my niece about her summer vacation plans, I remembered an elderly family friend giving me a piece of advice when I was a my niece's age. First, I should say that because I was sixteen, this "elderly" person was probably more like 45, but he had grey hair and wore Old Spice so I instantly thought of him as old. He was the Old Spice Guy before there was an "Old Spice Guy". It was the middle of summer and he me, "make the most of your summer vacations because when you grow up, you'll wish you could have the whole summer off." He said this in that a depressing, melancholy way that makes kids hope they never turn into that sort of person.

While my "elderly" friend was right—I haven't taken an entire summer off since I was a child—the kids in my life have inspired me to take a break from being too much of a "grown-up" this summer and have my own little summer camp right at my desk.

This summer, I plan to embrace the kid inside of me in a number of ways, including:

1. Laugh until I'm breathless. My four-year old niece, Mollie, can find a way to make anything funny. She gives people and pets silly nicknames and loves to replace words in stories mad-lib style. When all else fails she just laughs for no reason at all. When I asked her recently what she was laughing about, she answered: "Nothing, I just felt like laughing." When was the last time you laughed out loud at work? If you're not laughing regularly, you're not paying attention because we are in a funny business. How about a staff meeting at the end of the week to share accomplishments and tell "campfire stories" about the crazy stuff that happened during the week.
2. Go for no. In a great book by the same title, the authors' premise is that while 'yes' may be the destination, 'no' is how you get there. Kids totally get this! The word "no" is not devastating to a child. When they hear 'no' it gets their creative juices flowing and they reframe their argument, restate their case or just plain ask again until they wear you down. As kids we had no fear of hearing 'no', but somewhere along the line, we gave 'no' too much power. So now rejection feels personal and some times we don't even ask for fear of hearing the dreaded word. Find a picture of yourself at an age where 'no' had no power over you. This summer, be that kid. Research in the psychology of influence says that you are 40% more likely to hear 'yes' to whatever you ask for after you've been told 'no' to your first request. I like those odds.

In September, I'm excited to come to Ohio to spend a day with you! I have so much I'm eager to share with you including my "Weapons of Mass Production" presentation where we will take a closer look at the power of "no" and how to leverage this and several other powerful influence "weapons" to get to "yes."

So while I won't be at sleep-away camp this summer, I'm going to take a break from the seriousness that seems to creep into a grownup's life and extract the maximum joy out of each day. Getting older is inevitable, but getting old is not part of my summer plans.