

AN IVE FOCUS TEXT WHITE PAPER

FAMILY ADVENTURE NIGHT

Turn Family Activities into Everybody's Hobby!

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FAMILY ADVENTURES

Turn Family Activities into Everybody's Hobby!

Everybody thinks of a hobby, more or less, as an individual break from the daily grind. But how about developing a hobby the entire family can take part in. There are few "hobbies" as rewarding as building a family tradition. This can be especially important for two-income families where television can easily become the only "activity" shared by the whole family.

Almost any educator will tell you that parents are the first and most important teachers any child can have. Children learn what **and who** is important to them by seeing, and living with, what is important to their parent(s).

One activity to foster communication and togetherness might be a regular—weekly is proven most effective—toy, game, and hobby night. It is so easy these days to let work, school, and the business of life rule the day—every day—that we can easily lose touch with each other. If we get together one night each week for "break from the grind;" a toy, game, and hobby night when we can rekindle those all-important family ties.

Those families with small children will probably focus more on the toy aspect of the toy game hobby night. Take the time to get down on the floor and play with those youngsters. Cuddle those dolls and teddy bears; call yourself "grandma" or "grandpa." Push those trucks around and pretend right along with the kids. If your back can take it, let them take turns riding you like a horse while you crawl around and neigh. Every kid loves that! Putting a thick pad, or even a mattress, on the floor can even allow their pony to "buck" every now and then.

On summer evenings, try toy game hobby night in the sand box at the park. You would think sand box in your own the back yard would do as well, but part of the fun of going to the park might be sandwiches or other quick-fix dinner stuff that can turn a trip to the park into a family adventure. Using an old mesh produce bag is a great way to gather a variety of suitable sand toys to take along. These toys include various containers, a few wheeled vehicles, toy garden tools, and cast-off kitchen utensils. In the sandbox with your kids, you

can create towns with roads, castles, or just about anything **they** can imagine. The important thing, here, is to remember this is **their** time. You are playing in their world as well as your own!

Modeling dough is also a great activity for your family hobby night. Collect some small cookie cutters and old jar lids (for pans) and create fancy cookies and desserts - inedible and calorie-free, of course! The kids can turn a large box on it's side for a counter and place the goodies on display to sell. Of course, you'll pretend to buy, eat, and enjoy!

Some fun games for family night might include card games like Uno, board games like Candy Land or Life, and dominoes.

When choosing games to play there are a number of things to consider. Here are a few specific considerations:

- Is Scrabble, for instance, fun for everyone, or does all the spelling and thinking feel like work to some of the players?
- Does the game take forever to play, so that some players' attention spans play out?
- Does the game encourage merciless competition, like Monopoly, leaving losers feeling left out?

Some think it's important for kids to learn how to lose and still have fun. But others think it can actually be more fun to build something together. Kits and small short-term projects require cooperation, not competition. Don't "throw" the game, intentionally letting them win all the time, but don't mercilessly beat them every time either. If they make a mistake, explain the effect of the mistake and show how it might have been avoided. But most important, make it fun. If losing is a problem for some of the kids, check out some of the new cooperative games where everyone is on the same team.

Hobbies are also great to share as a family. Maybe your family would be interested in pursuing musical skills together. Families make great singing groups because, quite often, their voices match well. If that's not for you, maybe you'd all enjoy fishing. Square dancing is fun for some families, while others enjoy playing badminton or other active games and sports. The important thing is to have fun together.

Having a weekly toy, game, and hobby night every can help you stay close to your kids as they grow up. It will keep the bond of love fresh and the lines of communication open.

Does next Monday night sound good, or will Wednesday night work better for everyone?

Oh, did I forget to suggest that everybody should make that decision? The first few times, mom and dad might want to take the lead. The family night should be established for the same night every week. Then, as everything settles in (and to help eliminate things going stale), have a different family member choose the activity for the following week. The only hard and fast rule should be that it is a family activity (how about "adventure") night ... TV is not an activity; neither is just sitting around reading quietly. A trip to the library, on the other hand, might just meet everyone's desires.

Parents are the first and most important teachers any child can have because children learn what **and who** is important to them by seeing, and living with, what is important to their parent(s). One of the most important things a parent can give to a child is some personal one-on-one time. A child soon learns that mom's time is very valuable, and by her taking the time to spend with the child makes him (or her) feel very special indeed.

The same goes for a Family Adventure night, when nothing in the world is more important than the family!

RECIPES FOR KITCHEN FUN

While these recipes can be good for hours and hours of fun, most are not eatable. This means you also don't want to leave it alone around family pets. A few other suggestions: You want to start and finish these activities with a clean kitchen, have everybody wear an apron while mixing or working the ingredients, and make sure that you label any containers in which you are storing the finished products.

PEANUT BUTTER PLAY DOUGH

- 3 1/2 cups creamy peanut butter
- 4 cups powdered sugar
- 4 cups powdered milk
- 3 1/2 cups corn syrup

Mix ingredients by hand.
Can decorate with sprinkles, M&Ms etc.
This can be eaten. It is definitely NOT low fat or low calorie.

OATMEAL PLAY DOUGH

- 2 cups smooth peanut butter
- 2 cups rolled oats
- 2 cups powdered milk
- 2/3 cup honey
- Optional -Rice Krispes, Coconut Sprinkles, chocolate chips, Red Hots, etc.

Mix ingredients until combined.
Wash hands.
Lay down wax paper.
Store in air-tight container.

KOOL AIDE PLAY DOUGH

- 3 cups flour
- 1/2 cups salt
- 2 Kool Aide packages
- 2 cups boiling water

Mix dry ingredients together. Add boiling water. Knead on floured board.
Can add flour by sprinkles until desired consistency.
This play dough will last for a long time when stored correctly.

NUM NUM PLAY DOUGH

2 cups of honey
3 cups of peanut butter
3 packets powdered milk

Stir all ingredients together until smooth.
Add more powdered milk if desired.

Is sticky and eatable but if you are going to eat it, make sure you have plenty of water to wash it down with.

CLOUD PLAY DOUGH

1 cup water,
1 1/2 cup vegetable oil,
6 cup flour
Add a few drops of food coloring to water.

Combine water, oil and flour in a large bowl. Knead well.
Add more water if necessary in small amounts until the dough is soft and stretchy.
Cloud play dough should be used on a washable surface as it is very greasy.

COFFEE PLAY DOUGH

4 cups un-sifted all purpose flour,
1 cup salt,
1/4 cup instant coffee (Decaf is okay)
1 1/2 c warm water

Dissolve the coffee in the warm water.

In another bowl, mix the flour and the salt.

Make a well and add 1 cup of the coffee water into it.

Mix with a fork or with your hands until smoother.

Add more coffee water as needed: dough should be smooth not sticky or crumbling.

Store in air tight container.

When you're done making figures, bake in oven for 1 hour at 300 degrees or until hard.

A coat or 2 of shellac keeps it well preserved for longer lasting gifts but will definitely make this fun activity inedible.

FRUIT PLAY DOUGH

2 cups flour
1 cup salt
4 tablespoons cream of tartar
2 cups boiling water
2 tablespoons of cooking oil
3 oz package sugar-free fruit flavored gelatin

Mix dry ingredients in pan.
Add the water and oil.
Stir over medium heat until mixture forms a ball.
Pour onto a sheet of wax paper.

HOME MADE FLUBBER

All you need to do is read the ingredients to know this is not edible.

1/2 cup water
1/2 cup glue
1/2 cup water
2 T Borax

Mix water and glue together. In a separate container, mix 1/2 cup water with Borax (You should find this in the detergent aisle of the grocery store). Stirring the Borax mixture constantly, while adding the glue mixture. It should immediately glump up and look like flubber.
If it isn't really rubbery and tough, mix up more Borax mixture and add that to it.

HOMEMADE SILLY PUTTY

All you need to do is read the ingredients to know this is not edible.

2 parts Elmer's white glue
1 part Sta-Flo liquid starch

Mix well.
Putty must dry a bit before it is workable. Store in an air-tight container.

Beware of contact with clothes and carpet

HOME MADE PLAY DOUGH

All you need to do is read the ingredients to know this is not edible

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup of water
- 1/2 cup of salt
- 2 tablespoons cream of tartar
- 1 tablespoon of oil

Cook this ingredients until it forms an item in the pan.

Pour it out onto a Tupperware lid.

Cover with damp cloth.

Add food coloring if you like.

Store new play dough in the fridge in an air tight container.

It is non-eatable play dough.

SALT PLAYDOUGH

All you need to do is read the ingredients to know this is not edible

- 1 cup water
- 1 cup salt
- 1/2 cup flour
- Food coloring

Mix ingredients in pan.

Add food coloring. Stir on low heat.

When it thickens remove from heat.

Put some on waxed paper or floured surface and roll out.

Cut out objects.

Air dry objects few days.

Store un-used portion in air-tight container.

It is non-eatable play dough.

SOME ADVENTURE SUGGESTIONS

For families of all ages:

Treasure Hunts; Hide something, then make up a set of serial clues that everybody can follow to lead them to the "treasure." With older families, this can be done as a Road Rallye and even spread over ten or more miles. It can also become a way for younger children to learn how to read a map of your neighborhood or town. (Hint: The tops of most maps are North oriented.

Family Histories: This is one in which the entire extended family can become involved. Most families actually cover as many as five living generations so there is no end to the search or the surprises.

Who, what, or when am I? Each member of the family draws a card describing a person or event (you can make up your own deck). Then the rest of the people playing take turn asking between 15 and twenty questions which can only be answered "yes" or "no." If there are young (under 8 years of age) players, they can team up with an older player to think up questions.

Finding my way home: This can either be done in a large area or with a maze on a sheet of paper. Each player is given a starting point and a destination. The goal is to get from start to finish in the shortest distance. The game caller will give directions (turn left, turn right, go straight ahead, or go back) which each player may or may not choose to follow.

Popsicle stick regatta:

Planning a trip:

... and as you can see, the list is endless.