

Building Strong Families

FAMILY MISSION IDEAS

Family statements are statements about your family now and in the future. They put into words who your family is, who they will be in the future, and what difference your family will make in the world. Writing out family statements is a powerful, life-changing exercise. Your statements will help all members of your family focus on what is most important to you now and what they envision for your family in the future. The creation of family statements will empower your family to verbalize priorities, set standards of behavior, and solidify relationships. Writing out family statements creates a deep family bond, a connection that will be there for a lifetime.

We envision family statements affecting not only this generation but also many generations to come. One of our goals as a couple is that when each of our children leave home and start families of their own, they will create a family plan with their family.

In the Family Plan there are three basic statements: the mission statement, the vision statement and the legacy statement. Each statement clarifies who we are as a family and helps us to envision who we will be in the future.

FAMILY MISSION STATEMENT

Creating a family mission statement gives you the opportunity to write down what your family stands for – who you are to one another and to the outside world. Through creating a family mission statement, you will be able to be very clear about your priorities, your values, and your purpose as a family.

We believe your family mission statement is a gift – a gift your family can treasure, fall back on, and use in many ways throughout their lives.

FAMILY MISSION STATEMENT TEMPLATE

Your family mission statement should be fun to create and even more fun to live. Your mission statement is all about your family. It states who you are as a family, what you believe in, and what is important to you as a family. When you create a family mission statement you put into words your family standards, priorities, and practices.

1. Who are we as a family?

2. What do others say about us? About our kids?

3. What do we love most about our family?

4. What are our core values?

Write down two or three things in each area that are important to you regarding your family.

Spiritual:

Financial:

Career/Work:

Family/Friends:

Health:

Fun:

Other Areas:



What three words describe the type of family relationship you desire?

Committed	Dedicated	No-compromise	Family first
Close	Joyful	Disciplined	Risk-takers
Fun	Loving	Open	Outdoor people
Creative	Chaotic	Honest	An island
Belief based	Challenging	Concrete	Courageous
Spiritual	Sweet	Motivating	Compassionate
Safe	Inspirational	Giving	Caring
Welcoming	Inviting	Involved	Devoted
Comforting	Intimate	Living life	Selfless
Best friends	Involved	Volunteers	Secure
Dreamers	Energetic	Snuggly	Adventurous
Rewarding	Cheerleaders	Friends	Positive
Laughter	Advisors	Patriotic	Laid back
Political	Fair	Decent	Driven
Morale	Integrity	Generous	Work Ethic
Curious	Animal lovers	Athletic	Project-focused
Independent	Capable	Focused	Purposeful
History buffs	Extraordinary	Special	Direct
Awesome	Learners	Laughers	Pure
Cheerful	Exact	Precise	Playful
Entrepreneurs	Salespeople	Selective	Mechanical
Focused	Spontaneous	Spunky	Fixers
Stylish	Deeply rooted	Devotional	Flexible
Spirited	Likeable	Popular	Bonded
Individuals	Appreciative	Attractive	Together

Artistic	Academic	Traditional	Cautious
Spirited	Likeable	Popular	Bonded
Individuals	Appreciative	Attractive	Together
Artistic	Academic	Traditional	Cautious
Liberal	Successful	Rich	Accepting
Wealthy	Wise	Teachable	Temperate
Trouble	Timid		

Add your own...

What three things are most important to your family right now?

Career	Kids	Finances	Money
Faith	Fun	Communication	Parenting
Time together	Vacations	Pets	Future
Adventure	Action	Sports	Family time
School	Homework	Volunteering	Other people
Being happy	Learning	Growing	Teaching
Care taking	Add your own...		

Family Mission Template

You may use any or all of these templates to write your family mission statement. Or you may choose to create your own. The following are just ideas and templates that may or may not work for as you begin writing your actual mission statement.

Our family is _____, _____,
_____ and _____.

Our purpose is to _____.

We are most committed to _____.

As the result of our being a family, our lives are _____,
_____ and _____.

Family is _____.

We are _____.

Sample Family Mission Statements

"Our family is fun, connected, open, and honest. Our purpose is to love one another unconditionally. We are most committed to being encouragers to one another. As the result of our being a family, our lives are richer, more fun, and less stressful. Family is love and we are loved by one another."

"Our family comes first – period!"

"Our family is hard-working, fun-loving and disciplined. We love one another and spend time together. We are committed to education and building a future."

"Our family is a place to belong, to love others, and to make a difference in the world. Our purpose is to support one another's' dreams and to make a difference in the lives of others. Our home is a place to hang out and to have strong relationships. We value our time together and the individual talents of each member."

"Our family is love, fun, peace, and forever! We are committed to one another and to having lifelong relationships."

"We are a family of adventurers and dreamers. We take risk, try new things, and we are open to opportunities as they come our way. We grow, learn, and play together. Our family is a solid place to be and there is always love for another."

"Our family is a safe place to support and encourage one another. We play, work, and dream together. We love God, serve Him with our talents, and strive to continually grow in our faith. Our home is an open and peaceful place to bless others. We are goal oriented and committed to personal development. To achieve our goals, we strive to have structure, discipline, and balance, and to actively hold one another accountable. To develop ourselves we share our feelings honestly, ask for help when we need it, and maintain an active, healthy lifestyle. We are committed to our marriage and to maintaining lifelong relationships with one another."

Other families use a word, a color, a picture, a piece of art, or a symbol as their mission.



Building Strong Families

TIPS FOR FAMILY MEETINGS & SAMPLE AGENDA

Family Meetings

We believe family meetings can be an important part of building and maintaining a strong family. Family meetings are the place to plan for your future and to review and track your progress. Family meetings are the place for all members to share what's on their minds. It's a time to air grievances, ask for support, and celebrate successes. Family meetings are essential to the health of our family and are an important part of using this plan. In our busy world, we believe it is critical for families to set aside a minimum of 30 minutes per week to have a family meeting. This time will become a routine and a necessity. We believe as you make the

effort to implement family meetings, all members will come to look forward to them.

Family meetings are not a place to discipline, criticize, or single out a member. They are not designed to be parent led or entirely parent run. Family meetings are meant to be fun. If they're not fun or beneficial for all members they won't work. Trying to make sure meetings are meaningful for everyone will ensure the participation of all family members.

If you have never held family meetings, you may need to enter into this slowly, especially if you have older children. Older children may need to be coaxed into the meeting. They'll need to see value in the meeting and they need to be given the freedom to actively participate.

You need to hold firm and not back down. If kids see we are committed to holding these meetings and making them fun, they will eventually come around.

Family meetings are time set aside to promote meaningful communication and provide family discussion, decision-making, problem-solving, encouragement, and cooperation. Family meetings can be structured and rather formal or flexible and informal. At family meetings, everyone has a part and something to contribute. No one is less important than another, and family members contribute according to their age and ability.

There are many ways to structure a family meeting and many different agendas for running a family meeting. We have included a sample meeting agenda. Feel free to use this or create one of your own. Having an agenda is important. We do the same things each week. That way the kids know what is expected, they know what they need to bring to the meeting, and we can keep it short by keeping it on track.

Sample Family Meeting Agenda

1. Review Family Plan

This is a great time to review your mission, goals, or boundaries. Keep this part short during a meeting.

2. Weekly Menu

Review the upcoming week. Determine what nights everyone will be home for dinner and plan the menus. Ask for input on what other members would like to eat that week, then make notes on your grocery list.

3. Chore Chart Rotation

Determine what chores each family member will do that week. We suggest changing it so no one person gets stuck doing the same thing each week. Be sure to include extra things that need to be done from time to time.

4. Calendars/Schedules

Have everyone bring his or her schedule for the upcoming week. We review each member's activities and put them on the master calendar. This way everyone knows what is coming up and how to plan for the week.

5. Shopping Lists

We discuss needs anyone has. This includes household items, clothes, sports equipment, etc. Talking about this helps members to think ahead it eliminates last minute trips to the store the night before a big event.

6. Health Management

Doctor visits, dentist appointments, etc., can be discussed at this time. Also include exercise and healthy lifestyle items during this time.

7. Vacations/Family Fun

We love to plan family trips and fun outings. We decide each week what we will do for family night and at some meetings we take time to discuss upcoming vacation ideas.

8. Budget

Discussing family finances is important. We give our kids an allowance not for chores done but for being a part of the family. We feel it's good to review general family finances with the kids to teach them about real life, setting budgets, and saving for things we want to do together.

9. Sharing Time

Give each member a moment to share what's going on in his or her life. We use the high/low to do this. Each family member shares the high and low of their previous week and then shares any needs he or she has for the upcoming week.

10. Goal Time

Every family member writes down two goals for the upcoming week and we hang these goals on the refrigerator. Then we review the goals from the previous week.

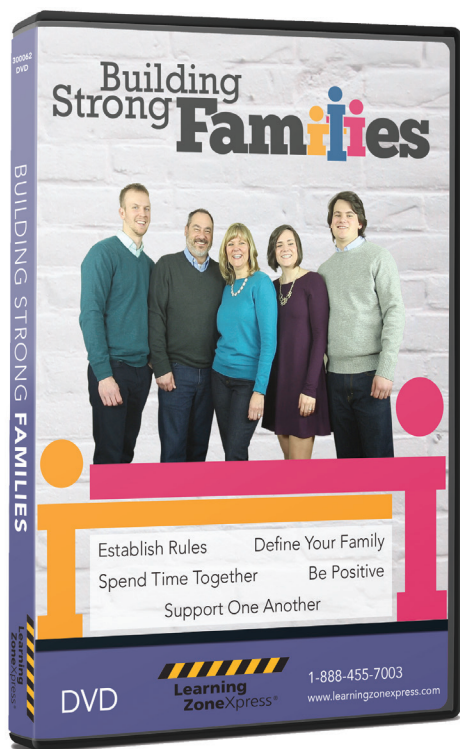


Ideas for Successful Meetings

- Have a set time each week.
- Keep the meeting to 30 minutes.
- Write individual goals weekly and share them out loud. Share successes from previous week and areas still needing attention.
- Take turns letting each person run the meeting.
- Give each family member two minutes of undivided attention. During this time no one but the person on center stage talks. All other family members show support by listening attentively.
- Review schedule for the upcoming week.
- Discuss chores and problem areas.
- Review family goals. Continue setting small goals to help achieve the larger ones. Create new family goals when needed.
- Have each member share the best thing that happened to him or her the previous week.
- Make meetings fun. Meet at a restaurant, a park, or hold the meeting prior to a fun family outing. Keep changing the agenda and the location.
- Celebrate one another and make achieving goals a big deal!
- Go around the circle focusing on sharing positive things about each person. Have each member tell every other member one nice thing.
- Think long term. Create traditions and goals that will keep your family connected long after the kids leave home!
- Most importantly, make meetings work for your family!

Creative Meeting Ideas

- Have the meeting at a restaurant.
- Go to a park or other outside venue.
- Dress up for the meeting in crazy outfits.
- Invite an outside person to attend your meeting.
- Have a silent meeting. Use sign language and notes.
- Go for ice cream after the meeting.
- Play a game while having your meeting.
- Have a brainstorming session about anything that you feel could be better in the family.
- Have a surprise meeting.
- Write each child a letter telling him or her why you're glad they are a part of the family and let them read it at the meeting.
- Review family photos.
- Create a family collage with all the things that are important to your family.
- Skip a week if the family is busy. Just make sure you let all members know that it's just for one week.
- Ask another family to join you and share how they run their meetings.



Building Strong Families

SETTING FAMILY GOALS

Setting goals both personally and as a family is a powerful way to build family unity, achieve success in life, and encourage all members to go after their dreams. Setting goals is about writing down what you want to accomplish in your life and then making a plan of action to accomplish it. Goal setting is a powerful process that can bring about amazing results in your personal and family life.

Secret, unwritten goals are not goals – they are wishes. And wishes are less likely to come true. Often people are afraid to write down their goals or share them with others for fear that they will not happen. Yet by keeping our goals and dreams locked up inside, we never give ourselves permission to go after them. Writing down goals is a powerful tool with proven results. The facts prove that those who write down their goals are more likely to achieve them than those who do not.

Ninety percent of successful people have written goals and many of these people also teach their kids to set goals. Goal setting has been known to help people perform better, be happier, and achieve things others have thought impossible.

The benefits of setting goals are endless. By setting goals you achieve more, increase your performance, improve your confidence, and take pride in your achievements. Setting goals can also reduce stress, help you focus, and help you feel happier and more fulfilled.

The benefits of setting goals as a family are just as big. By setting goals with your kids you teach them to challenge themselves, to work hard, to be clear about where they want to go in life, and to improve their confidence in their abilities.

By writing down our goals both personally and as a family, we are teaching our kids a lifelong habit. When they learn at a young age to set goals, it becomes a habit they will carry with them throughout life. Our kids are always watching us. If they see us setting and achieving our goals, they'll know it's possible. If they watch themselves set and achieve goals, they will be unstoppable.

We set both personal and family goals in our home. Each family member sets and shares personal goals with the family on a regular basis. We also set family goals. The entire family decides on family goals and we work together to achieve them. It's important, though, to not set too many goals – it's overwhelming and does not allow for focus.

If you are new to goal setting, start small. The best way to make goal setting a habit is by starting with a few small goals and achieving them. You can always add more goals as you grow.

Once a year we set annual goals and long-term goals. Then during our family meetings we set monthly and weekly goals, both personal and family goals.



Decide On Your Goals

Before you actually write down your goals, here are some questions to help you clarify them. It's important to spend some time and really think about what you want your goals to be.

- **What do I really want to accomplish most right now?**

- **What would make me feel good if accomplished?**

- **In what area of my life do I need to set goals first?**

- ▷ Some areas of life to think about setting goals in are:

- Financial
- Physical health
- Career/School
- Spiritual
- Emotional
- Hobbies/Activities/Fun
- Social interests
- Relationships

- **What do I keep putting off?**

- **What did I love to do as a child?**

- **How can I improve my life? What would make the biggest difference?**

- **If I could do anything right now, what would it be?**

- **Am I afraid to set goals? If so, what is behind the fear?**

- **What is the best thing that could happen if I set goals for myself?**

Setting goals should be fun – it's a process of self-discovery or opening yourself up to what is possible for your life and then going after what you want to achieve. Your life is up to you. And setting goals can help you clarify and decide right now what you want to do with the life you have.



Tips for Setting Goals

- Take time. An important part of setting goals is taking the time to really think about what you want to accomplish. It's important to be very clear about what you want to accomplish in the next month, year, or 10-year period.
- Write them down. This is the first step toward achieving them.
- Start small. It's better to start small and achieve the goals you set than it is to start with more than you can realistically handle or achieve at once.
- Use positive statements. When writing down your goals use positive statements. For example, if you want to lose 10 pounds, write that as "I am 10 pounds lighter and I feel great."
- Be precise. The more precise and clear your goals are the better. Write out your goals with as much detail as possible.
- Make the goal measurable. Include dates, times, and amounts so you know when you have accomplished the goal.
- Prioritize goals. If you have lots of goals you want to achieve, prioritize them. If we focus on too many goals at once, we often set ourselves up to reach none of them. Focus on one or two of your top goals. Then once you achieve them, move on to the next ones.
- Set realistic goals. It's important to set goals you can achieve in the timeframe you set. Being unrealistic can set us up for failure.
- Challenge yourself. Setting realistic goals is important but it's also important that you don't set your goals too low. Goals should be attainable but they should stretch us – they should challenge us to reach beyond where we are right now.
- Celebrate goals achieved. No matter how small or big your goal is, it's important to acknowledge and celebrate achieving it.

Simple Format for Writing Goals

I will _____ by _____.

To accomplish this I will _____

and _____ and _____.

Goal Examples

"I will be on the A honor roll this quarter. To accomplish this I will do my homework daily, get tutoring help with math, and turn in my grades to my parents each week."

"I will be working in a new job, a job that I love, by October 1, 2016. To accomplish this I will send 10 resumes every week, conduct 5 informational interviews each month, and attend one networking event each month."

"I will make the basketball team this fall. To accomplish I will attend basketball camp this summer, practice three days a week, and play a game at the gym with my friends once a week."

"I will take time for me each week for one month. I will do this by scheduling time in my calendar, being accountable to a friend for taking this time, and have a plan of four activities to do during these times for myself."

"I will start my own business this year. To do this I will create a business plan, secure a loan, and develop a marketing plan."

"We will travel to Florida as a family over spring break. To accomplish this we will need to save \$100 every week, give up eating out for six months, and research our travel options."

Creating a Family Goal Board

One of the ways we hold one another accountable is creating a family goal board each year. We set aside New Years Eve as our family goal night. This is a special time for our family – in fact, it's our favorite time of the year. The object of the evening is to spend time together reviewing our goals from the prior year, setting new goals, and creating our goal board for the upcoming year.

Our goal board is simply a large piece of tag board with all of our personal and family goals for the year in a big frame. It's simple, inexpensive, and easy to create. We save all the past years' goal boards so we can look back over the years to see our progress and to remember the goals we've achieved. When our board is finished, we hang it in our entry way as a constant reminder of the goals we set for the year.

In the past, we would write out all our personal, family, and business goals on New Years Eve. Now we take the time ahead of time to write out some of our goals. When they were younger, the kids needed more help setting goals so we set goals together with them. Now that they are older and they know how goal night works, they usually have their goals written or at least partially written prior to the night.

To create a family goal board, you will need to set aside a night with no distractions. Each family member must write out his or her personal goals for the upcoming year and share them out loud. Members can give positive feedback, ask for clarification, or offer support. Negative comments are not allowed when family members are sharing their goals. Goals are a very personal thing and we need to encourage family members in the goals they set for themselves.

Once you have written your personal goals, take the time and have each family member write down three family goals and share them out loud. Next vote on your family goals and decide which ones you will work towards. Try to use an idea from each family member. Now you are ready to write all your goals on your goal board, decorate it, and hang it on the wall.

Once you have created your first goal board, you can add goal review to next year's event. Begin the evening by reviewing all the goals on the board and writing the date each one was achieved. If there are goals that were set and not reached, each member has the opportunity to add it to this year's goal board or throw it out. Sometimes what you thought you wanted was not really what you wanted – it's okay to change your mind.

As you review your goals from the previous year, celebrate accomplishments, talk about why some goals were not achieved and support one another. This is not a time to criticize. It's a time of family celebration and growth – even if no goals were accomplished.

Over the years we have added to our goal board. The sky is the limit. You can make your family goal board whatever you want it to be. Some of the things we have added include:

- Career Goals – We have included a separate section for our career goals and have kept our personal goals personal.
- Dreams – We have added a section on the board where each family member writes down a few HUGE dreams.

- Personal Word – Each family member chooses a focus word for the year he or she is going to work on becoming. The focus word helps us to identify personality or character traits we want to work on, i.e. commitment, love, respect, discipline, fun, honesty, etc.
- Pet Goals – This one is silly, but we had to add it. Our dog was struggling with behavior issues so we created goals for her and we remind her constantly that she has goals to meet. This may or may not work but it was fun for our family.
- Quotes – Some years we haven chosen a quote that we want to be our family theme.
- Pictures – You can have younger children cut out pictures of their goals. If they want to learn to ride a bike without training wheels, cut out a picture of a child riding a bike and paste it under their goal section.
- Anything you want – Your family goal board is a personal reflection of your family. Use your own creativity to create one that is unique to your family.



Family Goal Board Worksheet

My Personal Goals for the Year: (Limit to no more than seven)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

My Ideas for Family Goals:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Other Items: Dreams, Career Goals, Focus Words, etc.

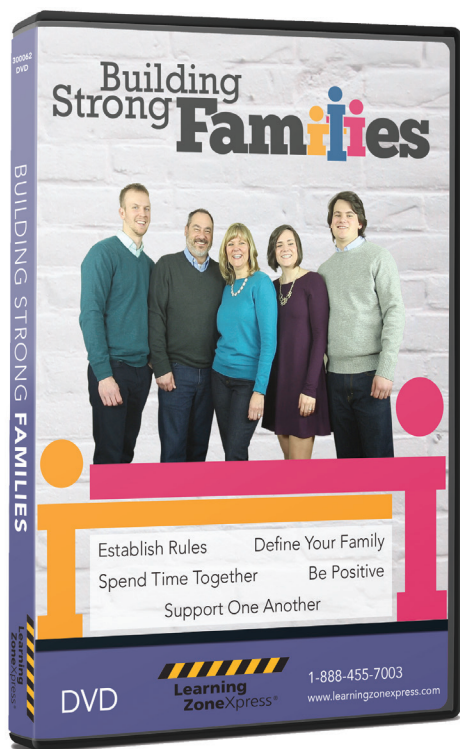
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Twelve Steps to Effective Family Goal Setting

1. Believe – You must first believe that family goal setting is worth it!
2. Set personal goals – Make personal goal setting a habit.
3. Take small steps – Start with and achieve small goals first.
4. Enthusiasm – Your family will follow your enthusiasm.
5. Encourage – Actively encourage goal setting in your family.
6. Commit – Habits take time to develop and goals are not reached overnight.
7. Review – Keep tabs on where each member is with his or her goals.
8. Be accountable – Set up a system to hold all members accountable for their goals.
9. Study success – Read, listen to motivational speakers and research successful people.
10. Visualize – Visualize your family achieving its goals.
11. Succeed – Successful families set goals and achieve them together.
12. Celebrate success – Make achieving goals a big deal.





Building Strong Families

FAMILY FUN IDEAS

Go for a pajama ride.

Tell everyone to get into their pajamas, but don't tell them it's a pajama ride. Once they are ready for bed, tell them you've changed your mind and that you're going for a pajama ride. Every one, including mom and dad, must wear pajamas and get into the car. Then go to the drive thru at the nearest ice cream shop and enjoy a treat in the car.

Take a midnight boat cruise.

Rent or borrow a boat for the night. When it gets dark, pack snacks and blankets and head out to watch the stars. If you feel brave, you may even decide to sleep under the stars.

Make a snowman.

Plan the whole afternoon for nothing more than snowmen and hot chocolate. Gather up your supplies and make the world's best snowman. If your children are older, have each child make his/her own snowman. Be creative.

Play the family finances game.

Take time to learn about money together. Make it fun. Try cashing your entire paycheck one week and then pretending to pay the bills with cash. The kids will be amazed at how fast the money goes and how much things cost.

Take a train ride.

Book a train ride to anywhere. You don't even need to stay at your destination – the train ride itself could be the whole trip. Before you go, study trains and plan your route. Make sure to pack lots of fun surprises, i.e., treats and games for the ride.

Go on a hot air balloon ride.

Imagine sitting high above your favorite city and sharing this special moment with your children. Make sure you've planned ahead with weather forecasts, treats, and a camera.

Have a backwards meal.

This special event meal can make any day a celebration. Simply serve the meal backwards. Start with dessert, move on to the main course, next bring out the salad, and finally end with the appetizer. Who said you can't eat your dessert first?

Play flashlight tag in the dark.

Kids love to be out when it's dark. Gather enough flashlights and make sure you have extra batteries on hand. Then go out for an exciting game of flashlight tag.

Go on a frog hunt.

Armed with flashlights and buckets, take your family on a family fun night of frog hunting. The goal is to catch as many frogs as you can in one hour or more. End the evening by releasing the frogs and then going inside to enjoy gummy worms and frogs.

Take a trip into a big city to see the big buildings.

Kids love to look up at the tall buildings. Choose a large city close to you and plan to spend the day or weekend. If possible, try to get up to the top floor of one of the tall buildings.

Explore a cave.

There are many caves throughout the United States you can tour. Just be sure the cave you plan to visit is safe and open to the public. While you are in the cave, be sure to look for bats.

Go camping.

Plan a family camping outing. Let the kids be involved in all the details. Once you are at the site, let the kids put up the tent and set up camp. When it's bed time, crawl in the tent together and tell stories.

Have a backyard bonfire.

There is nothing better than a backyard bonfire. Spend the evening roasting hot dogs, making s'mores, and telling stories.

Take a pretend trip to somewhere exotic.

Plan an evening adventure to your favorite exotic location. Prepare pretend passports, pack your bags, and begin the evening with a pretend airplane ride. Once at your "location", play games, eat food, and listen to music from that culture. If possible, end the evening with a movie about your location.

Camp out in the backyard.

Make this a spur of the moment family fun night. Wait for nice weather then tell the kids it's a great night to camp and go set up the tent. Have a fire, tell stories, and snuggle in the tent.

Plan a surprise weekend get away.

Pack everyone's bags and pick them up for school on your way out of town. Spend the night or weekend at your favorite nearby hotel or resort. You can even keep your spouse in the dark on this one and surprise the whole family.

Schedule two-minute dinner talk time.

Give every family member two minutes to talk without whatever they want with no interruptions. Other members simply listen for two minutes.

Sleep in the family room on sleeping bags.

Dig out the sleeping bags, rent all your favorite family movies, and have a slumber party in your living room.



Write a family cheer.

Make or buy your own pom-poms and then write your own family cheer. Include actions and silly family secrets to make it even more fun. Your cheer could go something like this:

“We are the Neujahrs, the awesome, awesome Neujahrs. Everywhere we go, people want to know why we are so awesome – so we tell them. We are so awesome because we have a plan.”

Cook over the bonfire.

We make hobo packets filled with all kinds of meats, vegetables, potatoes, and sauces. We wrap it all in tin foil and stick it in the fire until done. Then eat right out of the tin foil with plastic forks. It's a great way to entertain other families, too!

Breakfast over an open fire can be lots of fun. Try making eggs in an iron skillet, frying up some bacon, and having fresh brewed coffee and hot chocolate. This is a fun way to start a Saturday with the family.

Go to a water park.

Going to a water park is a great family activity when all members participate. Go ahead and join your kids – jump and slide and let yourself be a child again. Your kids will remember it forever.

Go to an amusement park.

It's time to play. Enjoy as many of your child's favorite rides as your stomach can handle.

Have lunch with your child at school.

Show up at school and surprise your child with a lunch brought from their favorite restaurant or let them buy you lunch from their lunch account. This is a great way to honor your grade school-age child while getting to know his or her friends.

Take your child out for lunch.

Instead of eating at school with your child, take him or her out for lunch. Make sure to check with your child's school ahead of time. You can even invite a grandparent or other special person to join the two of you as a surprise.

Date your children.

Take each child on a date separately a minimum of four times a year. Let the child choose the activity.

Give gifts of time.

For Christmas and birthdays, give your children gifts of time. These gifts could be tickets for the theater, a sporting event, a weekend away, a beauty treatment, a shopping trip, or a mini-vacation. The purpose of these gifts is to spend time with your children doing something they love.

Surprise your child with a day off.

Let them stay home from school for a day just to be with mom or dad. Make sure it is when they will not have lots of homework.

Volunteer together.

Serve meals at a homeless shelter, shop for a family in need, rake an elderly person's yard, or work at a crisis nursery. Help at church or school. Whatever you do, do it together as a family unit.



Make greeting cards.

Take the time to make personalized cards for other member of the family. Along with this, you can create banners, signs, and note cards to express your love to other family members.

Periodically leave a surprise note of love.

Notes of love can go anywhere – in drawers, lunchboxes, backpacks, cars, etc. As you make this a fun family habit, your kids just may turn around and surprise you with a note of love.

Write a loving message in the first snow.

When the first snow falls, go out in the yard and create a note to your family in the snow. Then gather them around and take time creating other notes together.

Cheer loud at your kids sporting events.

Always be their cheerleader and let them hear you cheer for them. Never criticize from the stands – always support and be respectful in front of their peers.

Take your kids to a fancy restaurant.

Have everyone get all dressed up and talk about manners and etiquette prior to the big night. Then have fun with it. The wait staff will love you and the kids (even though they may not like the food) will remember it forever.

Have a family fondue night.

Gather a few fondue pots and select a variety of menu items. Plan for this to be messy but make it safe by covering tables with towels and making sure the kids cannot bump the oil. Then talk and cook. This can be a fun, long dinner and a favorite family tradition.

Go for a walk in the woods at night.

Bring a flashlight and go exploring in the woods in the dark. Listen to the noises, listen for periods of silence, and just enjoy the dark together.

Stay in your pajamas all day.

This can be fun if one member of the family is sick or if everyone has been too busy for an extended period of time. Watch movies, read books, order pizza, and just do some serious lounging.

Bake cookies.

Bake together as a family and then deliver your homemade treats to someone you love.

Jump on a trampoline together.

Let yourself be a kid. Laugh, jump, and let go of all the stress you carry.

Have tickle wars.

This can be fun if all members like to be tickled. Just be sure not to overdo it.

Complete a puzzle.

Buy a jigsaw puzzle for the entire family to enjoy. Leave it out where you will be likely to work on it often and then leave it out until it's done.



Play the Wild Beast Game.

This game can be played anywhere, but can be really fun on a trampoline. Get in a big circle and have the youngest start. He or she chooses an animal to imitate and then acts out that animal while going around the trampoline. All family members follow this action for three times around. Then the next youngest member chooses an animal and the circle is repeated.

Take a hot tub and roll in the snow.

It sounds cold but it is actually not too bad and it's fun for the whole family. Older kids especially like this and will think it is way cool if mom and dad join in.

Rent a motor home and go on a long road trip.

This can be a family bonding experience and a blast. Prior to going, choose your route, plan which campgrounds you will stay at, and schedule some side roads along the way. Or borrow a motor home from someone you know and sleep in it in your driveway.

Rent a houseboat.

A houseboat is a motor home on the water. You have all the comforts of home and you can move your house every day from place to place. Be sure to bring lots of family games and an adventurous spirit.

Take the family ice fishing.

Pack a picnic and spend the evening eating and telling stories about when mom and dad were kids. It has become a weekly tradition for our family during the winter.

Share life stories.

Share your life stories with your kids through story time, letters, and photographs.

Make scrapbooks for your kids.

The pictures are important, but the words will make the difference. Write down your feelings and explain the events of your child's life. They will treasure the words you have written more than the photos you put in.

Leave notes when away.

Before you go out of town write notes to each child, put the date on the outside, and give to the caretaker to give your child each day. This helps with loneliness and gives them something to hold onto while you are away.

Dress up as a family for Halloween.

Halloween maybe for kids but dressing up can be fun and it will mean the world to your younger kids if you dress up with them. Try choosing a family theme and all dressing up according to the theme.

Cook together.

Cooking as a family can be fun and it's a great way to teach kids how to cook.

Make homemade individual pizzas.

Make small individual pizza and let each family member put his or her own toppings on his or her own pizza. Bake and then enjoy your pizza while watching your favorite movie.



Throw a “just because party.”

Surprise your kids with a party for no reason at all. Decorate the house, plan a special meal, plan activities, and just celebrate being a family.

Exercise together.

Join the local YMCA or exercise at home. Exercising together can be a great way to motivate one another and it can be much more fun when you do it together. Just don't push your kids past their physical limits or let them push you past yours.

Back rubs.

Plan a night to give family back rubs. Back rubs feel great and it's a great way to bond as a family. There are lots of good tapes and books on how to give a massage. Try learning some techniques and then practicing on your family.

Have balloons delivered to school for celebrating special events.

If your child's school will allow it, have balloons delivered to their classroom. If not, plan a time when your child will be home and have them delivered to the house.

Be in a play together.

There are great community theaters all across the country. Find a local group and try out for a play together with your kids.

Dress up box.

Have a dress up box and add to it regularly. Include fun hats, outfits, boas, jewelry, sports equipment, and anything else you think would be fun. Then on a rainy boring day, play dress up and take pictures.

Watch home movies together.

Plan an evening to watch old home movies of your childhood or theirs. This is guaranteed to be an evening of laughs and memories shared.

Entertain others.

Entertaining is a great way to have fun with other families. Choose another family to invite over and then let the kids help you plan the day. Plan some activities for all the parents to do with the kids and then some separate activities.

Play a neighborhood game of kickball.

Recruit your neighbors and get an active game of kickball started with adults and kids. This can be a fun way to get to know your neighbors and create lasting memories for your kids.

Run the mile together.

No doubt your kids will have to run a mile in school. As they prepare to do this, tell them you'll practice with them and when the whole family has worked up to running a mile, go out and run it together.

Late night fishing with lighted bobbers.

If you have access to a boat at night, try late night fishing with lighted bobbers. It's a fun way to enjoy the dark and the mystery of fishing.



Build your own home.

If you are going to build a new home, include the kids in the process and teach them all about the building process. This is a great way to learn and to have fun as a family. Make sure to have dinner in the unfinished kitchen, let them write on the studs before hanging the sheetrock, and put their handprints in the cement.

Give them room to make their own decisions.

When building you own home, let them be a part of creating their room. Or let them change their current room. Kids love to create and make their space their own.

Have a day of beauty.

This can even be fun for the guys! Plan a day where you do facials, massages, pedicures, manicures, hair treatments, and any other beauty routine you love.

Hike.

Find a place to go hike where you have never been before. Plan a route for the length you want to travel and make sure you bring supplies and plan for emergencies. Then hike and enjoy nature together.

Have a snow day.

Make a snow day a no-work day and use it to have fun. Go outside and make snowmen, bake cookies, and watch movies together.

Build sand castles.

Playing in the sand is an important part of childhood – don't miss out. Get in there and get messy with your kids.

Snorkel.

Find a lake or ocean and snorkel together. Make it a treasure hunt and see what you can find that is the most interesting.

Cry together.

If you are sad and life has been tough, one of the best things you can do is to have a good cry together. This bonds family members and creates a safe place to feel sad.

Pick berries.

Go pick berries together and make sure to eat lots of them while you are picking. Then go home and make your favorite treat with what you picked.

Play in the rain.

Next time it rains without lightning, go outside and play in the rain. Wear your rain boots and clothes that can get wet and have fun. Jump in puddles, splash each other and run around.



Try new foods together as a family.

Here are some fun options:

- Mussels, lobsters, clams, shrimp, crab
- Truffles, expensive chocolate, or cheesecake
- Crème Brûlée, baked Alaska, or chocolate fondue
- Create your own new or original recipes
- Lamb, veal, rabbit, or venison
- Sushi, oysters, shark or other exotic fish
- Edible flowers, unique salad greens, or exotic fruit
- Ethnic foods

The sky is the limit use your imagination

