

The One Thing Every Family Should Make at Christmas

Making memories might be the most important thing to do next month. It's more important than making cookies, making purchases or making money.

When we concentrate on making memories, rather than just going through our Christmas routines, our experiences will be richer. We'll intentionally pay more attention to the people we're with than to the tasks at hand. Therefore, we'll establish stronger emotional ties with the people and make memories that last.

Think about the activities you have scheduled next month and the tasks you want to accomplish. What if you think about them in the context of memory making? You might have already done some of the things I list at the end of this post, but maybe you can now have rich conversations to still broaden the potential for positive memories that last.

What would it take for you to create memories that are thought of fondly next year as you participate in activities and tasks next month? If you think back to past Christmases, what do you remember? Why do you remember those things and those people? Your answer to these questions may help you do things differently to create richer memories for your family this season.

Did humor make your list? I suspect it did because bonds are often deepened during times of joy and laughter. Look for opportunities to enjoy each other.

Did you think of something that involved a surprise? That's often the case for me as I reflect on strong memories of my childhood and even adult years. For your family, add something surprising that you've never done before. Or you could add a

twist to something you have typically done. This will make it more memorable.

Small, Insignificant Things Are Significant

Some of my best memories are those of small and seemingly insignificant things: seeing my sister-in-law putting newly baked Christmas cookies into a tin that belonged to her mom and has been used for maybe 40 years or more. Hearing a song on the radio and remembering who I was with when I heard it performed at a concert. Using wrapping paper my mom would have loved. A recipe that was hers that her grandchildren still love. Dessert plates hand-painted by my grandma when she was about 18 that we still use at my brother's home.

It's the conversation surrounding these things that make the memories—and, therefore, the people involved—come alive. Let's purpose to talk a lot about meaningful things as we're out-and-about and in our own homes. Let's get pods out of ears and eyes off of devices and talk. It can be done! Expect it. Have high expectations. Listen and talk. Talk and listen.

No one in our family would know about the Christmas cookie tins if Debbie wouldn't tell us. My nieces and nephew wouldn't know their great-grandmother painted the dishes their cake is on if we didn't tell them. They wouldn't know that the food they enjoy was first served by their grandmother to her father on Christmas Eve many, many years ago if my brother and I didn't tell them.

Make memories, not just cookies. Make memories, not just a clean house. Make memories, not just purchases. You get the idea.

How might concentrating on making memories influence the way you do tasks like these?

Choosing a tree. Decorating a tree. Shopping for a present for your child's teacher. Choosing presents for friends and loved

ones. Wrapping presents. Planning menus for times when family and friends will come over for dinner. Choosing outfits to wear here and there. Watching favorite Christmas movies together. Choosing recipes to make for different events. Making them together in the kitchen. Practicing the piano for an upcoming recital or to play for a visiting relative. Making cookies together. Eating cookies with hot chocolate in candlelight. Driving to see Christmas lights and decorations. Visiting shut-ins. Surprising neighbors with flowers, Christmas cookies, or something you know they would appreciate. Singing Christmas carols. Cleaning the house so it's more ready for relatives to arrive. Attending church. Having meaningful conversations in the car on the way home. Practicing for and then attending church or school Christmas programs. {eo}

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