



# CREATING MOMENTS

## Birthdays (or Anniversaries)

**Birthday Praise:** Stand the birthday person on a chair while everyone in the room takes a turn to tell them what they like best about them. Another idea is to keep a list of major events from each year of a child's life and review them each year on their birthday.

**Rite of passage:** When your child turns 13, have five adults take them out for a day to some place special to them to talk about becoming a man or a woman. At the end of the year, have all five come to your house for dinner and speak truth into your child's life to set expectations as an adult.

### Birthday Memories.

- Pull out homework from your child from two years earlier to see how "easy" it is now and how much they have grown.
- Play a TV show they used to love when they were younger.
- Keep a "birthday card" that the birthday boy or girl filled out every year with one insight they wanted to remember going forward?

**Memory Drive.** Drive around the town where you lived (or grew up) and go to all the "firsts": School, kiss, job, house, injury, best friend, etc.

## Parenting

### Bedtime Books.

- Rewrite your child's favorite story from the villain's perspective. It's kind of like the musical "Wicked" showing the backstory of the villain. This could coach your kids in the skill of empathy.
- Read a book from front to back and then immediately read it backwards. It's total gibberish and totally hilarious.
- Stop in the middle of a book and have the child write their own ending.

**Cousin Camp.** If you have a family reunion, rather than sitting around and listening to adults talk about old memories, create activities, talent shows, or competitions age appropriate to the cousins. The only rule is that every cousin has to cheer and champion every other cousin. This will make memories rather than reliving them.

**Radical "Yes".** Your teenage son asks you to play video games. You say, "Yes. Show me how." Your daughter asks you to let her get a new hairstyle, you say, "Let's do it together!" As you walk past the bubblegum machines at the grocery store rather than saying "NO" for the hundredth time, go get \$10 in change and empty that sucker out.

**No Chore Saturday.** Surprise your kids by saying that after breakfast we have a huge day, starting at miniature golf, then on to go karts, ending with a visit to the flea market or getting a new pet at the animal shelter.

**The midnight chat.** Wake up your child at 11:45 with a bowl of ice cream (or a fancy Charcuterie plate of candies). Make it to midnight together.

**The DJ Night.** Pull out the old record player (Spotify works too) and have everyone pick one song that is meaningful to them. Play that song and then tell everyone why it means so much to you. Everybody sings along if they can.

**Living Room Campout.** Rather than going to bed in our rooms, let's make a tent in the living room, pull out sleeping bags or all the pillows in the house and have a campout. Doing it on a school night would *really* break the script.

**Shoe Day.** Dad (or single-mom) take your kids on a dinner date and then go out to buy a pair of shoes. Caution: With daughters, this can last into their 30's.

**Play Hooky Together.** Take a day off work, go take your kid out of school and do something "out of bounds." Seriously, time with you is exponentially more important than what they will learn in school that day.

## Vacations

### Quest Vacations.

- **Sports:** Visit all the major league baseball stadiums you can get to (and take a picture of the same view).
- **Outdoors:** For outdoor lovers, the National Parks has a "passport" program that lists spaces for all the national parks. Park ranger stations all have a passport stamp from that park.
- **Education:** Design a vacation around a child's educational interest such as zoos for animals, DC for US History, or Architecture of the South.

**Peak Days on Vacation.** Rather than doing 9 days of the same thing, save up to do something extra special on three of the days. Often this adds little or no expense, such as a marathon walk across a whole city, a scavenger hunt in the city, a picture taking tour of all the most interesting doors, etc.

## Relationships

**Marital Milestone Journal.** Create a journal and break it down into the years of your marriage. Come up with the milestones (however small): Houses you have lived in, birth of children, jobs, cars, remodeling, vacations, surgeries, funerals, advancements, friendships, etc.

**Anniversary Reenactments.** Try to recreate you first date, or dress in what you wore on your first anniversary, or prepare a momentous meal from your early relationship. Play music that you listened to during your courtship, watch your wedding video, or page through a photo album.

**Date Jar:** Go on a date to a coffee shop. The sole purpose is to plan the next year of dates. Some will be hour dates, some evening dates, others all day dates (each should be color-coded). Go through a list of things to do in Arizona and Phoenix, write them on a paper, put them all in a jar, and each Monday randomly pick from one of the three categories for the following week's date.

**Un-wedding Ceremony:** The death of a spouse (as well as divorce) can be a painful experience. Some individuals find it difficult to remove the wedding ring they wore for so long. A simple gathering of friends and family to remember the good times and important milestones, and solemnly remove the ring in a ceremony with family/friends can be a helpful and healthy way to give the individual closure or permission to move on.

### **Valentine's Day (or anniversaries) FOR SINGLES:**

- Rather than sulking, plan a day to visit a widow, widower, or divorcee to take them on a date or perhaps just sit with them for the evening, so they don't have to be alone.
- Provide child-care for a couple you care about who cannot afford to go on a date without free babysitting.
- Take yourself on a date and write three letters: One to a mentor in your life (opposite gender) who is your standard of who to date, tell them what characteristics they have that you are looking for. Two, write to a mentor (same gender) to tell them the characteristics you are trying to emulate for any future romantic relationship you may have. Three, a couple who model marriage as you may hope to have some day.

### **Group Date Ideas:**

- Order one dessert as an appetizer with four forks.
- Have the server bring out one meal per person at the table without telling you what he or she is bringing (the pickiest eater chooses first).
- Go to one restaurant for an appetizer, a second for the main course, a third for dessert, another for drinks, etc. Each person can choose one item that represents where they grew up and find a restaurant that specializes in that food item. They have to tell a story from their childhood about the place they grew up while enjoying that food item.
- Go to Taco Bell with a large group and order one of everything on the menu. Trust me, this *will* make memories.

## **Dinner Table Discussion Starters:**

### **For Families**

- **Pits and Peaks:** Each person describes the best moment of their day and the worst moment of their day.
- **Sad, Mad, Glad:** Describe something today that made you sad, something that made you mad, and something that made you glad. This really helps kids put words to feelings and identify why certain behaviors trigger different emotions.
- **Who needs our prayers?** Take turns praying a simple one-sentence prayer for someone who is having a difficult time.

### **For Couples [Download the app "36 Questions" and do it on a date]**

- Describe a day, when and where, you were happiest.
- What is your greatest fear?
- If you were to brag about yourself, what would you say?
- Which living person do you most admire?
- Which talent would you most like to have?
- If you had no fear of failure, what would you try accomplish?
- What would you like to have inscribed on your tombstone?

**For younger kids**

- What superpower would you most like to have, and why?
- What is the funniest thing a teacher ever did in class? Was it on purpose or by accident?
- Does your teacher(s) treat everyone the same? Should everyone be treated the same?
- What was your most embarrassing moments? (Parents may start to show it's ok to be vulnerable.)
- What do you like best about our family?
- If you could make one rule that everyone had to follow, what would it be?

**For older kids**

- Who are the "popular" kids at school? What makes them "popular"? Who decides who gets to be "popular"?
- Who is the best cartoon character ever?
- If you had everyone's attention in the world for 10 seconds, what would you say?
- If you had to eat only one food for the rest of your life, what would it be?
- If you could repeat one year of your life, which one would it be?
- What two items would you grab if your house were on fire?
- What is your earliest memory?