

Fun Activities for You Unique Family

By Karen Whiting

We can have a smooth-running household, but if there's no fun, it's not going to build strong bonds between the members. However, in making plans for what to do we need to know what fun and excitement mean to each person in the family. Consider what happened when I set up a few field trips recently.

Park trip

Outing with grands where I knew one liked to take photos of birds and nature while two wanted to run and play or explore something new. Alas, at the park most activities were closed. But they had a playground and trees. While one took photos and found lots of birds, the other two played a bit. They got bored and wanted something new and a snack. While watching the one photograph birds, I noticed the trees and spotted one full or ripe berries. I called the other two over to examine and taste the berries. That got them excited as they picked and ate and one climbed and ate.

At the beach

At a sandy beach one snapped photographs, one paddled with dad in a boat, and one swam. The beach offered opportunities for all to have fun and be creative. One could work on photography skills and setting up the right shot. One could work on paddle strokes and find the most efficient way to move the boat. One could palay in the water, observe the waves, and experiment with movement. All three needed some skill before they started. One had learned to use a camera. One had some basic skill with paddling a boat. One knew how to swim. When the swimmer became tired, he grabbed a book and read.

Choices According to Individual Personalities

It took more than just saying, "Let's go," to make the kids happy. We need to assess what people in the family enjoy that they have in common or activities that can be done at the same location.

The outgoing extrovert wants to socialize while the introvert wants to explore alone or follow behind quietly. That may mean creating an activity in which each person participates in a way they like most. Anew game to play might mean the socializers jump in and play while the quieter ones sit and observe, or serve snacks.

Even with art projects, one may want to explore the materials and think through the design and approach while another wants to jump in and start making something. That's okay as long as you allow time and know what to do at each stage. When the socializer is quickly finished, let that child be a cheerleader for the others or go create a snack to celebrate when everyone finishes.

This also applies to activities at home. Just as some meals everyone likes, and some only a few like, moms try to find a balance and prepare a meal with components where everyone can enjoy some of the food. So too, understand that you can plan activities but need some flexibility for how and who participates. There may be some, like faith activities or work projects, where everyone needs to participate.

Consider personalities and how that impacts a child's perception of art activities. List what you consider fun, educational, and life skills you want to weave into family life. For each item you list, write down what aspect each person might enjoy about it. That helps you get started.

Personalities and Preferences

- Socially interactive child
 - This personality prefers to work in a group.
 - This child likes to talk while working.
 - Social butterflies jump in fast, and do things without paying attention, so it's easy for the child to make mistakes, spill things, and make a mess. But, they laugh and have fun. Simply put down plastic or newspapers to make clean up easier.
 - Start with simple projects. Make it less messy with glue sticks, glue dots, crayons or colored pencils, and less pieces.
 - These children cheer others on and want to take photos.
- Powerful director child like to lead and meet goals
 - These children catch on fast but also likes to change things ups and make their own design. Allow them to be creative and praise their imagination.
 - These natural born leaders pay attention, so simple show the steps and let them get to work.
 - These children like to lead and help teach projects they have mastered. They can get bossy, so remind them to be kind and good teachers.
 - Your little leader likes to make new projects rather than repeat ones mastered. Have great books with lots of ideas for child to find new projects to try.
- Thoughtful analyzer is a child who watches, thinks, and takes his or her time
 - These children prefer to work alone, or have a separate area for working, and prefers not to share supplies.
 - This child is quite, watches and listens carefully. Slow to decide on color and other supplies. May want to watch others do the craft before trying to do it.
 - Teach a project one step at a time. Let your child work slowly, at his or her own pace.
 - Child may want to make duplicates to perfect the craft. Child also likes to make art projects as gifts. because he or she is so thoughtful.
- Friendly supporter
 - This child tends to procrastinate, but can be motivated with humor and incentives. That may mean the promise of time to play or relax after completing the artwork.
 - This child likes stories and will share humor or stories while working on a project.
 - This child tends to be a peacemaker, and will cheer up others who are frustrated.
 - Choose easy projects that don't take a lot of time for this child. If child likes a certain medium let them explore and do more projects with the medium.