



MAKE TONIGHT A FAMILY FUN NIGHT!

Let's face it: The words "Family Fun Night" can prompt a lot of eye rolling among kids who fear that "Forced Family Fun" will result in the lamest evening possible. Your job: Get creative. Following are three starter ideas.

Movie night ... with a twist. Don't watch a movie together; make a movie together. Any smart phone can shoot video, and countless computer programs allow you to edit the video into a finished product. Planning the movie, gathering props and shooting and editing might fill up a few evenings. When everything's done, invite friends over for a premiere.

Photo scavenger hunt. Phones play a key role in this activity, too. Give everybody a list of things around the house or neighborhood to find and photograph, including things like flowers or birds on a tree. Set a time limit and give prizes to the first one to find every item.

Invented games. Pull together random objects and get everybody to collaborate on creating a game with them. It can be a board game, a physical activity, a brain teaser, whatever ... just make sure that everyone has a chance to win, involves a lot of silliness and it ends with a sense that everyone won by having a good time.

IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 Indoor activities for the family
- 3 Fitness and wellness benefits
- 4 Harvest of the Month: Pumpkins

Smart Facts

73%

of children want to spend more time with their parents.

20

minutes is the average time parents play or do hobbies with children each day.

56%

of children say their family has a "very close" bond.



BRING THE FUN INDOORS

Some of us look forward to the colder months as a time for activities like reading books and snuggling in front of a fire. Unfortunately, those quiet times might not last if you have a houseful of restless kids. "There comes a time when the inevitable winter crazies set in," said Washington Post columnist Lauren Knight. "That is when I break out the list of indoor ideas."

The key is finding activities that can keep the whole family engaged. Following are a few suggestions.

Board games. Let's face it: Board games have stuck around forever because they are reliably fun. But that doesn't mean you have to stick to the ones you've had around forever. Try new games. Borrow games that friends say they love, go to a game store and ask for guidance or simply take a chance and buy a new one that looks interesting.

Salon night. Granted, this one will appeal mostly to the females in the household, but if you've got girls to keep happy, this is an almost guaranteed winner. Get together everything they need to give each other manicures and pedicures, to do a little facial care and anything else you can think of. Mix up some fruit drinks, put on some soft instrumental music and offer shoulder rubs when they're done.

Little screen, big screen. Combining smart phones and a smart TV can result in a lot of fun with apps like Jackbox Games, which allow you to play interactive games with everybody in the room. Most apps allow you to choose games for age-appropriateness and for different types of groups, and the games include everything from drawing goofy pictures to brainteasers.

Legos build-off. How do you make Legos competitive? By giving everyone the same number of identical pieces and challenging them to build the tallest structure, the strongest bridge, the funniest animal or some other unique structure. After an initial game in which everyone plays individually, pair off into teams, combine Legos piles and start again.

Learn something online. "Learn" might not be the first word that comes to kids' minds when looking for something fun to do, but finding an online instructional video that gets everyone together to try to master a new skill can be a blast. Go for something silly, something challenging or something totally unexpected. Regardless, everyone will enjoy the time together and walk away with a new skill – or at least a funny story.



"There comes a time when the inevitable winter crazies set in ... That is when I break out the list of indoor ideas." – Washington Post columnist Lauren Knight

TAP INTO YOUR BENEFITS TO INCREASE YOUR WELLNESS

Some employers offer mental health programs. Others provide yoga classes. Still others hold routine health screenings.

Sounds great doesn't it? Here's the problem: Too few employees take advantage of such programs. Get the most out of your benefits – and be healthier – by tapping into your employer's wellness offerings. Following are some common programs and ways to make the most of them.

Employee Assistance Programs. One of the most-neglected of all employee benefits, Employee Assistance Programs (or EAPs) provide a wide range of free resources for people trying to improve their physical, mental, family or fiscal health. Contact your HR team and ask for information.

Mental health services. With increased awareness of the importance of mental health concerns, employers are adding mental health services to their standard menu of benefits. If you are having mental health concerns, connect with your company's Employee Assistance Program, and find a mental health provider within your network. Many employers cover more sessions for mental health care than in the past.

Financial wellness programs. In a recent study, 60% of employees said that financial issues are their top source of stress. Recognizing the impact stress has on their teams, employers are offering more and more services that help employees facing financial challenges. Talk to your HR team about services that might be available to you.

On-site fitness centers. If the gym is at your workplace, your excuse for not working out withers. A couple of times a week, substitute a workout for lunch at a restaurant or schedule a fitness session before or after work. Choose activities you enjoy and recognize that the goal is better health ... not professional-athlete fitness.

Classes and programs. Do you smoke? Need healthy-diet info? Want to de-stress? Nearly every workplace offers free classes and programs that help you eliminate bad habits and develop better ones, and many classes are online and, therefore, flexible. Squeeze something worthwhile into the time you otherwise would step out for a smoke, get a snack at the vending machine or something like that.

Group activities. Many employers sponsor group activities such as team participation in a community walk or run, on-site fitness classes and more. Grab your work friends and make participation a social activity. You'll have so much fun, you might forget it's about wellness.

Regardless of how you connect with your employer's wellness programs, you'll discover that those programs do what they're supposed to do: increase your overall wellness. That's a benefit everyone should take advantage of.



Health Literacy Month

It's hard to stay healthy if you can't access health information. That's why people with "low health literacy" – those who have a limited ability to find, understand and apply healthcare information – are more likely to make medication errors, visit the ER and have worse health outcomes for children. Health Literacy Month seeks to lower barriers to health information in order to boost overall health. Learn more [here](#).

HARVEST OF THE MONTH: PUMPKINS

Despite the fact that the pumpkin is a versatile and healthy food source, only a fraction of pumpkins grown in the U.S. make it onto the dinner table. Almost 80 percent of all pumpkins sold are “decorative,” meaning they’re carved up for Halloween or simply used in displays.

Still, the big orange fruit (yes, it is another one of those foods we think of as a vegetable but is actually a fruit) has a lot to offer as food. It’s a low-calorie source of vitamins and minerals, it delivers a high anti-oxidant punch and it’s packed with seeds that are superfoods in their own right: One ounce of pumpkin seeds delivers 9-10 grams of protein and the daily recommended allowance of other nutrients.

If you are interested in reaping the benefits of dining on pumpkin, your first job is to make sure your choosing from pumpkins grown for consumption rather than carving.



With that done, choose one that is uniform in color, with no signs of mold and no soft spots. Look for an intact, dark green stem. Choose a good one and it will last for a few weeks at room temperature, and up to three months in the fridge.

Of course, you can simply buy canned pumpkin, which assures you you’re getting the right kind, but be sure you’re buying pumpkin puree and not pumpkin pie mix, which has sugar, spices and other additives.



Recipe: Pumpkin-Lentil Soup

Ingredients:

- 3 cups water
- 3 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 2/3 cup dried lentils, rinsed
- 2 large garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1 can (15 oz.) pinto beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (15 oz) black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (15 ounces) pumpkin
- ½ cup mild salsa
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 5 cups fresh spinach, lightly packed

Directions:

Combine first six ingredients in a 6-qt. stockpot; bring to a boil. Cook, covered, over medium heat until lentils are tender, 20-25 minutes. Then stir in beans, pumpkin, salsa and salt until blended and return to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, stirring occasionally, uncovered. After 20 minutes, stir in spinach and cook until wilted, about 3-5 minutes.

Nutrition Information:

CALORIES: 244; PROTEIN: 15G; CARBOHYDRATES: 44G; FAT: 1G; SODIUM: 857MG; FIBER: 11G; SUGARS: 6G; CHOLESTEROL: 0MG

Sources: Accessed September 8, 2022

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