

10
INTENTIONAL
—
WAYS
TO BRING YOUR FAMILY
CLOSER TOGETHER



Hi there!

I'm so glad you grabbed this cute little e-book I put together!

I am a HUGE advocate for family togetherness, and I've found that it doesn't just happen, it takes intentional planning. I'm always looking for ways to strengthen our ties, and build each other up. I don't tolerate unkindness between siblings, I aim to nip it in the bud, right from the first yelp.

Recently, I've had friends ask me how it is that my kids get along so well, and I didn't quite realize that was an odd thing. I mean, I remember my older brother and I fighting when I was in middle school, so I did notice a bit that my kids were different that they didn't fight (much) but the fact that they actually enjoy playing together, I didn't know that was an anomaly.

I started thinking, and I came up with a list of over 30 ideas that our family does to strengthen our bond, that I saw as unique or different. That's exactly what I'm sharing right here in this free e-book, the first 10. I hope you love the ideas, and that you'll stick around for the 2nd edition to come out, and check out all of the other family fun I share on [Capturing Joy](#), and in my newsletter.

A lot of these ideas don't necessarily come naturally and will take reminders, but just try to implement one or two a month, so as not to overwhelm yourself or your kids! I truly hope that you will see a difference in your family closeness.



Kristen Joy Duke



1. TAKE FAMILY PHOTOS



It's not just because I am a photographer that I think it's important to take family pictures, but because I truly see it as a visual reminder to every member of the family, that "WE ARE A TEAM!"

Whether you have a professional take them, set up a tripod and take them yourself, or pass off the camera to a friend, be intentional about this family ritual at least once a year.

Yes, you may have groans from some members of your family, and you may feel like you want to pull your hair out at times, but it's worth the effort, I promise.

I've got lots of tips on my site to help you with clothes, printing, decorating, and everything else!

[CLICK HERE FOR FAMILY PICTURE TIPS](#)



2. ROSE, BUD, & THORN



This is a fun family activity that a friend shared with me a few years ago, and we strive to do this at family dinner each night. We go around the table, and everyone shares their rose, bud, and thorn with each other.

Rose: Something good or positive that happened that day.

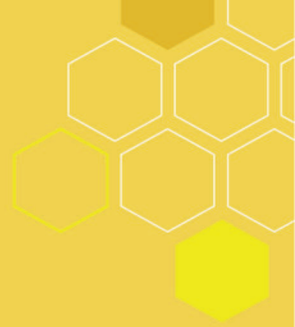
Bud: Something they are looking forward to.

Thorn: Something not so good that happened.

Usually for the thorn we will hear about a naughty classmate, or something silly, but I just love this as a way to be intentional about our family dinner discussions.



3. THEME SONG



We have a song we made up, and my kids think it's so fun to sing to guests when they come for a visit. We all made it up together, so it's funny and serious at the same time.

What we did was sit down with pen and paper to brainstorm ideas, and we made a list of all of the qualities we are striving for as a family and as individuals. It has an intro, then we thought up words and an Acrostic Poem for "TEAM DUKE."

From our outline, we fit our ideals into this, and pulled it all together from a Looney Tunes silly song, and even made it extra crazy at the end. I wasn't so sure about it at first, but my kids love it so much, it has settled with me.

We typed it up, and it hangs in a prominent spot in our home, so we don't forget it!

[LISTEN TO OUR SONG HERE!](#)



4. READ CHAPTER BOOK TOGETHER



Years ago, my husband started reading the Narnia series with our kids, and I loved how the children were riveted, hanging on his every word as he read.

We've since read a few other series together, and I love that we are all huddled in the same small area in our home, and enjoying a book together. The kids enjoy the camaraderie, and I love the family togetherness, creating memories, while simultaneously forging a stronger bond.

As a side note, studies have shown the importance of reading out loud to your kids for their brain vocabulary, self-esteem, and communication skills, so it's a win all around, right? Even my teens enjoy this, so it doesn't have to end when they can read.



5. WORK ON PROJECTS TOGETHER



My husband likes to build, I like to paint, and whenever we have projects, big or small, we include the kids. Sometimes we really need the extra hands, but mostly we we like our kids to learn the skills so that they will want to tackle these types of projects when they grow up.

Yes, it's true, it takes extra time to teach them the skill, and sometimes it isn't done the way we would like, but if you can look beyond being impatient, reminder yourself of the greater good, you can have so much fun with the process. As an even greater sidenote, you'll become closer as a family, as you enjoy the project together, and long after it's done.

Allow your kids to take ownership, which in turn builds their confidence and self esteem, too.

[CLICK HERE TO SEE OUR DIY PROJECTS](#)



6. MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE OR POEM

I am a BIG fan of memorizing! The scriptures, poems, or songs I memorized as a child have stuck with me into adulthood, and I have tried to do the same with our family, in learning them together.

I've shared on my site some fun printables of scripture verses, as well as a handful of songs that have detailed pictures to help the kids visually remember them.

We have taken on a scripture a month, and work on reciting them nightly as we have our scripture reading time. You can also select a favorite poem or quote that you love that inspires, and learn that together as well. Learning together is fun and inspirational, too!

[CLICK FOR FREE MEMORIZE PRINTABLES](#)



8. FAMILY HUG

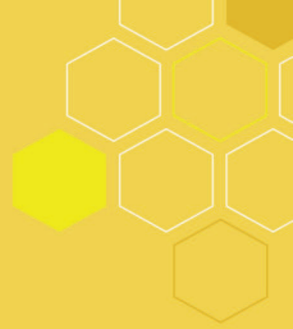
The family hug is something that I've just recently been encouraging, and I just love it so much. My kids all think it's pretty funny, too, so I'm going with it!

Each night after our family scripture reading and prayer, we gather together in what looks like a team huddle. We are usually kneeling, and we form a circle with our heads turned in, and arms hugging and chant, "Family hug ... family hug ... family hug ..." in a sort of sing-song voice. We sway as we do this, and it seems that the big kids sway so much, they are going to knock us all over. It ends up being a game of who-will-fall-first. The boys don't always love it, but will participate because they know I do.

We laugh, smile, and I take a snapshot in my heart of just a silly little thing that brings us closer together.



8. GROCERY SHOPPING RACE IN TEAMS



Grocery shopping is a pain to me, and though I'll admit I've used a delivery service a time or two, I generally go by myself.

If our family is out though, and I need to grab some items, I'll announce that we need to hit the store, amid some groans in the group. One time, I made it a game, and it's now become a race every time.

We split up into three teams, and I will text each group a list of items, and we race to see who can make it to the front of the store first with their haul. It gets done much quicker, and we have a fun time doing it, so it's a win/win!

Next time you need to go to the store, take the gang, and give this a try, it makes a chore FUN!



9. NO DEVICE AT THE DINNER TABLE



I am a HUGE advocate of family dinner time. I feel fortunate that my husband's job allows for him to be home at the same time each evening, so we plan to each shortly thereafter.

I've intentionally not scheduled kids activities during this precious time, because it's important to me. For 20 minutes each day, we sit together as a family, looking at each other, talking about the day, and just having facetime. There is absolutely NO electronics allowed at the dinner table.

If you need to, have a basket near the table to start a collection (for mom & dad, too), but make it a priority to focus on each other, and you will find you will become closer as a family.



10. VIDEO OF INSIDE JOKES

Every family has inside jokes. It's the silly phrases or facial expressions that only you will "get."

Last summer, I decided to type out a list on my phone over the course of a few weeks, all of the random idiosyncrasies that my kids will do and say. I didn't ask them first, I just started silently taking note..

I eventually told them the list I'd gathered, and it helped jog their memory of lots of other things, and they helped me add to the list.

Then, one afternoon at the end of the summer, I read through the list, as they performed, and I recorded, and we couldn't stop laughing. Now we have a great video memory, and we can't wait to make another this summer!