

Family Fun and Learning Begins Now

written by Yardena Slater
October 30, 2022



Longer evenings and cooler weather are ideal for family fun and learning that Begins Now!

Yay! We are back to normal time here in Israel with the turning back of the clock this past motzai Shabbos. Longer evenings and cooler weather are ideal for family fun and learning. To be honest, I always have big dreams for the colder weather season, which don't always end up materializing. I want to work with my kids on social skills, acts of kindness, life skills, character development and confidence boosting. Oh, and having some family fun wouldn't hurt.

With every year that passes I manage to get a little bit more

organized for this. I am sharing with you today what I have thought of and prepared so far. Winter afternoons and evenings do not have to be boring or filled with even more movie-watching and electronics. If we take advantage of this special time, we can give our kids rich and varied learning and family fun experiences. Come spring, they will have gained lots of skills, fun memories, and book-reading.

Life skills

I looked online for life skills ideas to teach kids. Turns out there are many, many things we can and should be teaching our kids, which they will never learn in school. From basic nutrition to table manners, how to prepare a simple dinner, how to use a can opener, how to do laundry, how to clean the oven, how to spend and save money wisely and much more. I wrote 25 skills on index cards and then placed them in a box.

The plan is for a couple of times a week, for the kids to pick one index card and read the life skill aloud. I then explain it to them followed by a hands on tutorial. They then get to practice the skill themselves. Once they have it down pat, we put that particular card away. Once we have gone through all of the cards, we will have a Life Skills Graduation party, with some extended family members joining in, where we will talk about the life skills acquired, praise the kids, and enjoy a festive meal in honor of all their hard work.

If we take advantage of this special time, we can give our kids rich and varied learning and family fun experiences!

Making Chanukah decorations

I know it's a little early but it's a fun, fine-motor-skills boosting activity that will actually come quite handy in 8 weeks from now. Making paper chains, cutting out cellophane dreidels and oil cans, making home-made menorahs, baking and freezing sugar cookies in the shape of dreidels and menorahs, all to be displayed or hung up the week before Chanukah. It's

a great way to slowly bring in and prepare for this fun and special holiday.

Enjoy the cold and rainy outdoors together

It does not get that cold where we live in Israel, but it certainly rains and even downpours at times and the weather certainly gets cooler. So, while there are no snowballs to throw or snowmen to make, we love to stand outside in the rain with our mouths open, trying to drink in some rain drops. We have rain boots, and everyone is encouraged to splash in the puddles. Another thing we love to do is go to a park and collect pinecones, acorns, and interesting stones. We dry them at home and then spray paint them or put glitter on them and put them on display.

Play new games

Designate a Family Fun Night with some games for playing only on this night. Bananagrams, Rat A Tat Cat, Pantomime and Spot It are favorites around here. Thursday evening is our family fun night. We'll have cholent, potato kugel and pickles or homemade pizza and coleslaw, and then play a game together. It doesn't have to take long. Makes for good memories and laughs.

Read together every night

Pick a book that you feel most of the kids will enjoy. I have read autobiographies of Torah scholars, Jewish history novels, books about the Parsha, and books containing just riddles and jokes. Sit on the couch together or in bed and read to them for 5-15 minutes. Even if not everyone joins you for the read, read aloud anyway. Do this consistently and you will see that at least some of the kids will join you and look forward to it.

The way I see it, winter is a time for bonding, self-improvement and enjoying being at home with family. With a little bit of planning ahead, we can use this season to really come out ahead in these areas. I hope you take advantage of

this special, limited-time gift we have in this season.