

November 29, 2019



QSI INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF **PÁPA**
HUNGARY

A Togetherness Kit

This week is Thanksgiving in America, and celebrated by many around the world. Just yesterday, my teen daughter announced that it is her favorite holiday. I thought to myself, “You know your teen is truly ‘adulting’ when they make that declaration.” It is a time for family, friends, and food—and ideally laughter, love, and not too much family tensions.

How to promote shared discussions and shared experiences during this time? Thanksgiving’s themes of gratitude, empathy, and sharing are a perfect launching pad. If put into practice, these traditions are the best medicine we have in the face of all the negativity seen in the media and on the internet.

In fact, I am not even going to discuss screen themes directly. Yet, I strongly believe that when we focus on how to create time for the things we worry screen time is negatively impacting, ultimately it is very much screen-time related. It is all about solutions.

Here are some ideas of where to start:

1. **Our Thank Yous.** When my kids were young, we started a habit of saying one thing we were thankful for at the dinner table. So at some point in the meal, someone will ask, “Ok, what are our thank yous?” I think of it as a little inoculation of love. It helps boost their positive perspective-taking and helps put the negative lens aside. I love knowing that many families do this or similar traditions at their tables. And, it is never too late to start something like this. Even if it only works out once or twice a week, I am convinced it still has a lasting impact.
2. **Partner With Someone.** Recently a friend asked me to start a gratitude practice with her. About five days a week, I send her an email about things for which I am grateful. She doesn’t have to respond because, for me, it’s really about the accountability that keeps me going. She also sends me things she is grateful for about five times a week. On down days, when I just want to tell a friend my disappointments or sadness, instead, I reach for a few grateful thoughts and type them off—and yep, I feel 100% better. One benefit is that I know I have a kind person who will receive them, and another one is that we are also growing closer through this. My teens know we do this, and I wonder how it might rub off on them someday with their friendships.

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Upcoming Events

- Dec 3 PSG Meeting
- Dec 3 6-9s Concert
- Dec 5 Dan and Claudia Show
- Dec 6 Elf Musical QSIB
- Dec 13 Early Dismissal
- Dec 16-Jan 3 Winter Break

Lunch December 2-6

- 2: Chicken Kyiv with rice and corn
- 3: Brassóí pork ragout, fries
- 4: Spaghetti with tomato sauce and meat dumplings
- 5: Chicken nuggets with mashed potatoes
- 6: Pizza with salami and cheese



A TOGETHERNESS KIT (CONTINUED)

Go Through Recent Videos. Most of which are likely on your computer or phone — and share the year with others. I used to suggest photos, but now so many of us have little videos woven in, why not watch a few videos to discuss the recent past. There is bound to be plenty of laughter and memory sharing through this activity. Your kids will, of course, welcome the opportunity to have some parent-sanctioned screen time.

Record A Meaningful Interview. Your kids could use their phone (or your phone if they don't have one) to interview older friends and relatives to add to the family history. This activity can be an incredible way to foster communication and open conversations. There are tons of free voice memo apps, and likely one is already on your phone. There is a very good cheap transcription service called Temi that will make these interviews very easy to transcribe. You simply upload the audio file, and for 10 cents a minute, it quickly transcribes and emails you a word doc version that is very accurate. So, if your child did a 60-minute interview, it would only cost \$6 to see it in print. Also, when I bring up podcasting to young people, they get excited about it. For many of them the idea of creating one puts a smile on their face.

Create A Mini Walking Tour. By doing this, you will bond with your neighborhood — or wherever you are this holiday. Try this: Google the history of your neighborhood, or a park near you or where you are staying, and write down some fun facts on little pieces of paper. Then get the people you are with to do a walk and create a game in which different people read things at different times. Maybe they change things up, and people have to decide if it is true or false.

MORE IDEAS . . .



For more information, click on "Scout Me In" below:



Be A DJ For A Car Ride. If you might be driving somewhere with family, take 10 minutes to put some new songs on your phone to play in the car that will spark nostalgia. Perhaps a song from when your kids were young, or better yet when you were their age. These songs can ignite some precious discussions.

Create Kindness. This is a wonderful article to discuss: [How Thirty Days of Kindness Made Me A Better Person](#). In it, the author Cecilia Meis writes about the science of giving and gratitude. Yet, the best part is her list of the 30 acts of kindness she did over 30 days. Things like: "Buy a coffee for the person in line behind you. Drop off desserts at your local police department. Leave a random uplifting message on someone's windshield. Reach out to a past favorite teacher and let them know what they meant in your life."

Recognize The Complexity of Kindness. Open up a discussion with the question, "When did you try to do something kind and it did not go as planned?" The concept of kindness all too often feels like it is supposed to be easy peasy, all wrapped up with a pretty bow on top. Yet, clearly, life is like my weekly laundry, full of unmatched socks no matter how hard I try to prevent this.

One example of complicated kindness was when my daughter recently went to donate blood at a drive at her high school. Right after they had extracted the blood, and as the needle was coming out of her arm, she got queasy and lost her lunch. Three months later, she got an email from the blood donation program, asking if she would donate again. She was determined and went to the hospital where the drive was being held to give again. This time, with a needle in her arm, she made it about 5 minutes before she became ghostly white when they stopped and put ice packs on her. Tessa, my dear, I think you gave it a valiant try... now time to realize your body is not cut out for this. But girl, do I love your gusto!