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Saving Memories of Your Children

By Mark Brandenburg MA, CPCC

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A few years ago, my three-year-old son and I settled in for the last stage of his good night routine. It had been a good day for him, he had been very active and had spent a great deal of time in the sand and in the water.

Right now he was tired, and I was as well. We lay down together in his little bed and after a few moments he said, "Daddy, when I get big can I live with you?" I assured him he could live with me any time he wanted to.

A moment later he said, "Dad, when you die you're going to feel something on your face and it will be me touching your face." Then he added, "I will kiss you on your cheek." He moved over, kissed me lightly on the cheek and cuddled in next to me.

I was aware of tears suddenly welling up in my eyes and rolling down my cheeks. I was also aware that I didn't want to have to explain why I was crying; as I opened my eyes to look at my son, I noticed he was fast asleep.

I spent some time just looking at him, savoring the moment and wondering about the depth of the reaction I had just had. It occurred to me later that I didn't remember having many of these kinds of tender moments with my own father. I felt both happy for a chance to experience it with my son, and saddened that I didn't remember more of them with my own father.

It also occurred to me that this was a time in our lives that would be extremely short-lived. This time of innocence, and the magical moments that make up a three-year-old's life, would soon be gone forever.

What will remain, however, will be my memory of this moment that we had together. It was a moment that made all of the difficult work of being a father worthwhile. It was a moment worth remembering.

Being a committed father can at times feel like an incredibly thankless and unending job. It can feel like you are no more than the janitor, chauffeur, and handyman in the house where you live. And then you

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will have "a moment." A moment like this in which your child expresses absolute, pure, and unconditional love for you.

When your kids have left home and you look back at these years, it will be one of the memories—strung together with many others—that make up the recollections of your fathering.

As we collect these important memories, it seems worthwhile to discuss how it is that you remember them—both for yourself and for your children. Here are some ideas:

- Write a letter to each of your children, in which you remember the experiences you had with them and also some reflections on what you were experiencing while they grew up. It can be a valuable way to

remember these experiences, and also a wonderful gift to your children when they get older.

- Regularly tell your children about some of the most memorable times you've had with them and some of the entertaining/funny things that they said or did. Kids love to hear stories about themselves from their dad or mom, so have a boatload of them on hand.

- Form rituals around your children whenever possible, whether it's for some event in their life or a changing of the season. Using rituals will be a great way for all of you to remember these things and to make them more meaningful.

- Start your own parenting journal in which you chronicle the joys and struggles of being a father. It will not only give you a priceless piece of reading years down the road, but will help you to better understand yourself as you reflect on your own joys and struggles.

- Encourage your children to start their own journal when they are old enough. This is a great way for your kids to help themselves process their own feelings. They'll be more likely to do it if they see you're doing it as well.

Many fathers lament the speed with which their kids grew up and were out of the house. They feel that they'd like to have more to remember of their children while they grew up.

Videos and pictures are certainly valuable ways to remember your kids, but they don't capture what you were experiencing during those years. Keeping a written record of your reflections during these years will provide you with a valuable way to capture these experiences.

There's going to be a time, soon after your kids leave home, when all you'll be able to "hold" is your memories of them.

May you find a way to hold them that honors the precious times.

Mark Brandenburg MA, CPCC, is the author of "25 Secrets of Emotionally Intelligent Fathers" (http://www.markbrandenburg.com/e_book.htm#secrets). For more great tips and action steps for fathers, sign up for his FREE bi-weekly newsletter, "Dads, Don't Fix Your Kids," at

<http://www.markbrandenburg.com>.

Five Inexpensive Ways to Help Your Children Invest in Holiday Memories.

By Pamela Cole Harris

Christmas memories are never dependent on the amount of money spent or the popularity of the toy. Memories are made up of amount of heart invested and given. This year, let your children invest their time and hearts in making Christmas memories for your family.

1. Buy white or red place mats and let your children create their own artwork with fabric crayons. A placemat can be made for each guest at Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner. Your children will feel an important part of the festivities.
2. Make paper angels and have your children write short messages to each family member stating the things about that person for which they are thankful. Your children will have an opportunity to think beyond the commercialism of the day to appreciate the blessings they already have.
3. Start a cookie exchange among the neighborhood children. Your children can make a dozen cookies for each family in the neighborhood and deliver them wrapped in a colored tin. They can then sit back and wait to see the kind of cookie surprises come to their door!
4. Allow your children to make this year's Christmas cards. Simply buy blank cards at your favorite office supply store and let your children loose with magic markers. They can even compose a poem and message for each recipient.
5. Have your children come up with small tasks they can easily do – like taking out the trash. They can then write those tasks on plain paper angels they make themselves. Have them deliver the angels to elderly neighbors as a gift of sharing for the holiday season. Learning to give the gift of themselves can be the most valuable memory of the season!

Let your children become a vital part of the planning of the holiday season and not simply receivers of gifts. It will help them understand that giving can be as much fun (and more rewarding!) as receiving. And their memories of this holiday season may set a lifelong pattern - which may be the best holiday present of all!

Pamela Cole Harris is an editor and writer with 35 years experience. Visit her website,

, for her unique view of home decorating and remodeling

(and a free monthly newsletter!). Or for original content unique to your website, written especially for your keywords and your audience, visit

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