

cover story

Families who craft together, stay together

The founder of Arts Inc. gives us tips for family bonding through art.

By Paula MacMillan Perich

No other part of our lives seems to hold as much significance as our childhood. Memories from childhood are particularly strong and are often imbued with a unique enchantment. How do you preserve these memories with your children when day to day life is so busy and time seems to fly by so fast! Most people take family photos or make videos of time spent together, buy memorable gifts, or enjoy eventful experiences.

Another way of holding onto special memories is by creating art together as a family. Most of us haven't created anything since our own childhood, yet we can still quickly understand the many benefits of creative expression together. Firstly, it's a great way to casually chat with your child. But as imagery starts to correspond with your thoughts and ideas, you soon realize that it's also a fabulous way to connect, de-stress, and work through complicated emotions with your child. It shows your child it's ok to make mistakes and it builds up their confidence and self-awareness.

As many of us are families in transit, we often never know where we'll venture to next, or what our future holds. Friends and work situations come and go, but one thing that is constant is family. In my own experience working with families to create art together, I've seen the power that art has to bond and build lasting memories. The following are just a few of my favorite activities for families to do together.



Art Journaling

The definition of an art journal is flexible because there are many ways to build them, which is why they speak volumes to everyone! But mostly art journaling is about saving memories in a creative way. One of the best times to make an art journal is right after a holiday. If you saved your luggage tags or tourism tickets on your holiday, this is a great place to start. You can use those physical memories by pasting them into your art journal and drawing or painting around them to convey the feelings you had while experiencing those moments. Remember that art journals don't have to be masterpieces. The most important thing is to enjoy the process and have fun spending time together as a family!

Suggested materials:

1. Watercolor paints or pencils
2. Color pencils
3. Acrylic paint
4. Various pens and markers
5. Glue sticks (for collage)
6. Washi tape
7. Posca paint pens
8. Old magazines and interesting ephemera

How to get started!

Firstly, it's important to select the right size of the book and the right paper for your content. Depending on your skills and interests, you can customize your journal with mixed media, such as drawing and painting, so selecting a book with the right kind of paper to hold a variety of media is essential. Once you have your perfect book, go through all the printed material and physical mementos of your recent holiday or of anything else you'd like to put in your art journal. Leave blank spaces for future sketches, dates, fun family quotes and Polaroid photos, and before you know it a travel art journal has begun. These can be very empowering as the owner gains confidence on each new creative page. You can finish the journal all in one go or you can keep it as a work in progress, adding a new page as you make more memories. Start a new one each year, or for each new adventure!

Art journaling can give you valuable insight into the wonderful moments and challenges in your life, especially when you later reflect on what you have written, stamped or drawn in it. These will be your most prized books in years to come!

Paper Marbling

Paper marbling is a creatively mesmerizing process of making unique and colorful patterns on paper. The fun thing about this technique is that it is largely unplanned; the pattern and color blending are uniquely and accidentally created through the use of color droplets. It is a most satisfying activity, especially because the patterns are created immediately. It's basically instant gratification art!

Gather these materials:

1. Flat baking tray, large enough to fit your paper
2. Shaving foam
3. Spatula or ruler
4. White paper
5. All different colors of food dye or diluted fabric paint

How to get started!

For paper marbling you can buy ready-made kits, which still require you to DIY, otherwise you can use products you might have available at home. Firstly, spray the shaving foam into the tray and flatten it smooth with a spatula or ruler. Drop food dye or diluted fabric paint onto the shaving foam and then swirl or comb it into waves with a wide tooth comb. Place dry white paper face down onto the shaving foam and gently press the paper to absorb the dye. Pull the paper up from one edge and scrape the extra shaving foam off and allow it to dry.

Once you have your finished project, what you do with it is up to you! You can hang it on the fridge or use it to wrap gift boxes, or cover notebooks or more!



Paper Making

This project is great because it's fun to do and also helps teach your kids about the environment and the importance of recycling. Paper making is essentially using your old discarded pieces of paper to make new paper!

Gather these materials:

1. Shredded copy paper, newspaper, wrapping paper (or paper torn into small pieces)
2. Food processor or blender
3. A flat mesh or burlap screen that can be laid flat in a large plastic tub
4. Chux, cotton, or muslin cloth large enough to cover the paper
5. Dried flower petals, dried leaves, flower seeds
6. Lace off-cuts or lace doilies for added texture
7. Corrugated plastic confluence sheet for paper frame, cut to desired shape (must fit inside your mesh screen)

How to get started!

Soak shredded paper overnight in water until it is fully saturated. Scoop out a cupful of wet paper and blend in the food processor with water until it becomes a liquid pulp. Add more water as desired. Pour your liquid pulp evenly onto your mesh tray to allow water to drain through. Gently press flat with muslin cloth to squeeze extra water out. Dry slightly in the frame if possible before releasing it onto a towel for complete drying.

To make custom shaped paper (circles, hearts, etc.) cut a template shape from your confluence plastic board and place on the mesh screen before pouring in the paper pulp. Press the muslin cloth into the template and clean the edges. If you want to add flower petals, leaves, or flower seeds, simply arrange them on top of the freshly poured wet pulp and press in with your muslin cloth. To create a lace or deep textured finish to your paper, lay the lace underneath the pulp directly onto the mesh screen before pouring the paper pulp in. Flip onto a flat towel to dry. Remove lace before paper is dry. Try dripping food dye into the wet pulp for colored paper.

Card Making

This creative project is a family favorite, not only because they are fun to make but because they're fun to give. Often-times, these handcrafted cards are far more treasured than the gift they will presumably go with, especially when the message written inside is from a loved one. They can be used to mark a special occasion such as moving house, a birthday, or an anniversary. There's always an occasion just around the corner. Just saying 'Hello!' Can brighten up someone's day, and making a handmade card is the perfect way to do it.

Suggested materials:

1. All sorts of paper including paper doilies
2. Glue stick
3. Cardstock or heavy paper for folding
4. Washi tape or ribbon
5. Silk flowers or petals
6. Buttons
7. Embroidery thread
8. Fancy shaped hole punches
9. Beads and embellishments
10. Scissors, blades, or paper trimmer
11. Alphabet stamps or stickers

How to get started!

Card designs can be as simple as a pattern made in Washi tape, or they can be as elaborate as intricate paintings or collages. Cards look even better if you can include various colored or patterned paper to collage into an image, or combine string, tags, hearts or cupcake shapes.

Messages can be printed from a computer, then hand cut and mounted to create a shape or a wiggly line of words. Words can also be added to shapes like a paper heart or a balloon shape. Or you can hand sew letters to create a word or do simple running stitch, and even turn buttons into a bunch of flowers or a row of little people. With the right materials, the possibilities are endless!



Tie Dyeing

Fold it, bind it, press it, dye it. Tie Dyeing (or Shibori) is an ancient Japanese art where natural fiber fabrics are manipulated to create patterns when dipped into colored dye solutions. It came back in style during the 1960s Flower Power era and has certainly proven its stylistic staying power! The look is fresh and crisp and fun, and because the organic outcome of the design is owed as much to accident as to careful planning, it's also a celebration of the imperfect.

Gather these materials:

1. Light colored fabric item for dyeing (such as a T-shirt)
2. A large tub for each color dye
3. Fabric dye
4. Salt to fix the dye
5. Rubber bands, pegs, string, clamps, bulk clips, wooden shapes
6. Wooden spoon and tongs
7. Rubber gloves
8. Coat hangers or clothes line to drip dry the newly dyed fabric

How to get started!

Start with a natural fiber garment in a light color. White cotton T-shirts, socks, scarves, handkerchiefs, linen, cotton table runner, or tea towels are all perfect! Tie your dry fabric item in multiple patterns - circles, zig-zag pinch, crumple, or uniform folds, for example. Secure each pattern with tight rubber bands, string, strong pegs, clamps,



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or clips. Set out your dyes into different pots or containers and put two tablespoons of salt into each color. Before you dye your item, completely submerge it in clear water and let the fiber weave open. Wring out the excess water from your item and submerge it partially into the first and lightest of your chosen dye colors. Different dyes may have different instructions, but a general rule of thumb is to leave the item in the dye for 15-20 minutes while you agitate it with tongs. The longer it soaks, the more vivid the color will become. If you are using multiple colors, completely rinse and wring your garment before adding more ties and before changing color dye. Do not unwrap until after the very last color has been added and until the garment has been well wrung. Hang the item immediately to line dry in the shade. Iron when dry and wash separately or hand wash after 72 hours. **SE**



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