

Collaborating on Summer Activities



Thoughts by Dawn Dole

My family and extended family gather each summer at a lake on a beautiful property with 9 cabins. We have been doing this for over 50 years and when a potential of 80+ relatives, ages 3 to 89, spanning three generations (soon to be four) get together, life can become a challenge. However, our time together is full of storytelling, remembering and sharing the past 50 years. Even more time is spent creating new memories everyday. There is a lot of conversation around creating activities which involve all ages - some relaxing and some exciting like tubing down the river. My family has collaborated and cooperated for 50 years to create a space that is welcoming to everyone. Our relationships grow each summer and my children now know that they are loved by some 80 + relatives including grandparents, aunts/uncles, great aunts/uncles, first cousins, second cousins and beyond.

With many weeks of summer time remaining, let's think about how we all want to enjoy the sunshine, the warm weather and time together with family members. How do we create a family experience full of joy, love and good times? Have you ever planned a family outing or vacation together so that everyone's voice is a part of the planning experience? Or do you tend to have one person do the planning and everyone else goes along for the ride? What kinds of questions can we explore so that everyone's image of a great time is folded into the plan?

Imagine that your family and extended family are about to go on a week-end vacation/holiday together. What does 3 year old Mary want to do? What does Grandma want to do? What do the four teenagers want to do? What is fun for one person may not be fun for someone else and how do we know this?

Gather everyone together or if it is not possible to bring the whole group together, bring a few people together at a time and ask the following questions:

1. What was the best family vacation you have ever had? What made it the best? What did everyone do before, during and after to make it the best? What did you do personally to make it the best?
2. With our upcoming vacation approaching, what will make it the greatest vacation for you personally? What do you think will make it a great experience for the others going with you?
3. Imagine that it is one month after our vacation. What are your fondest memories of our time together?
4. What can we do today to help make this vacation the best ever for you and everyone who is coming with us?

This summer, find ways to create time and space for dialogue. Meaningful questions lead to meaningful conversations. To stimulate interesting and energizing communication within your family, begin asking questions that bring about conversations that reach the positive core of each person and the whole group. In this way, we co-create the world in which we live.

Please feel free to share your experiences of collaborating on family time this summer. Email Dawn Dole at info@taosinstitute.net