



Kids & Families Together

February 2017

12 Ways to Celebrate Valentine's Day with Your Kids

Not sure how to celebrate Valentine's Day with your little sweethearts? Here are 12 fun ways to make the day special for all of you:

Make memorable meals.

Holidays offer ideal opportunities to create traditions your kids will remember for life. Create signature dishes you have every Valentine's Day here on out. Some yummy ideas to get you thinking:

- ♥ Use a heart cookie cutter for heart-shaped French toast. Serve with red berries, sprinkled with powdered sugar. No time for this one? Try heart-shaped toast spread with strawberry or raspberry jam.
- ♥ A berry delicious smoothie looks quite festive for a snack.
- ♥ Monkey Bread is delish and easy to make with kids.
- ♥ Heart-shaped meatloaf with mashed potatoes. Accompany any meal with sparkling cider in champagne glasses and suddenly you have a fancy feast.
- ♥ Stuffed shells get top props from kids and adults alike.

Create Valentine's Day decorations together.

They are bound to pull at your heartstrings when you pull them out each year. For the simplest, make paper chains to hang from the ceiling or cut out hearts to tape to windows and walls.

Decorate their duds for a festive day.

We love these simple heart button covers. Or how about a red dotted bow tie?

Celebrate with a little pampering by giving mini manis and pedis.

- ♥ Draw teeny hearts with nail art pens!

Host a special tea party for favorite friends, real or imaginary.

A tea party takes snack time to a whole new level. Serve finger sandwiches spread with strawberry cream cheese or jam, cookies and tea, of course.

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Having Faith

Dear Faith,

We have a fifteen year old daughter that we adopted when she was a year old. She was placed with us at a month old and never returned to her birth mother due to her mother's drug use and neglect. Her mother did not show up for supervised visits and she eventually lost her parental rights. Her bio mother did not name the father. We were not given lots of information about the rest of her family but we do have her original birth name. We don't know if she has siblings or not. Our daughter knows she was adopted and we have done our best to give her as much information as possible along the way. Now she is a teenager and she is moody and withdrawn and often approaches us like we are the enemy. It is so hard to know what issues might be related to adoption and what is normal teenage behavior?

-Anonymous

My answer would be that it is probably a bit of both. My niece who was adopted and now has two bio teens of her own posted a wonderful you tube video on Facebook called "Securely Attached Families with Teens." I would highly recommend watching this as a starting place to remember the challenges that all families are facing while raising teens not just those adopted into the home. The teen years are a time of magnified insecurities and heightened emotions as they grapple with changing hormones and issues related to growing up.

All teens struggle with identity issues, this is intensified for adopted teens. Hopefully, discussing adoption with your child has been a part of what your family holds important throughout your child's growing up years. As adolescents, their questions grow deeper as they seek to understand their past. They may wonder, "Why was I given away?" "Was there something wrong with me?" or "Do my birth parents regret losing me?"

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Kids & Families Together's mission is to strengthen relationships and provide safe, supportive help and education to keep family members emotionally connected to one another.

IN OUR COMMUNITY

A look at what's happening this month

Feb. 4 — Groundhog Day 5k & One Mile Fun Run

All ages and abilities including walkers and strollers are welcome. Come with the spirit of Groundhog Day, costumes encouraged. A fundraiser for Moorpark High School's cross country and track teams. Moorpark High School, 4500 Tierra Rejada Rd., Moorpark. Registration Moorparkgroundhogday5k.org.

Feb. 5 — Conejo Valley Art Museum

Inspired Illusions by Tim Hengst, digital artist. Free admission. Conejo Valley Art Museum, Janss Market Place (near food court), T.O. for information, call 492-8778.

Feb. 11 — Birds of Winter

Over 100 different kinds of birds live in our area. Come meet some of them and stroll through Camarillo Grove Park. 9-10:30 am.

Feb. 18 — Free Family Day at Carnegie Art Museum

Bring the family to Carnegie Art Museum, 424 South C Street, Oxnard. For more information, call 385-8158.

Feb. 20 — Healthy Day Walk/Run

Walk, run, health fair with free screenings, food, and beverages. Ventura Community Park, 901 S. Kimball Rd., Ventura. Presented by UFCW Local 770 Icaza Foundation. Proceeds benefit the Leukemia Society. For information and registration, visit ufcw770.org.



Keeping up with Kids & Families

There are a number of ways to stay in the loop with what's going on at Kids & Families Together. If you are reading this, you're already on the right path!

You can also "Like" us on Facebook, send us a tweet on Twitter @KandFT, follow us on LinkedIn, check out our calendar on our website, give us a call, or stop by our Center.



12 Ways cont. from pg. 1

Share the love.

Load up your table with craft paper, doilies, foils, markers, crayons and paints to create homemade Valentines for friends.

Have a photo shoot.

This Valentine's Day Photo Shoot will give you some good ideas on how to use props to mark the day. Try some fun props, such as a chalkboard, balloons, streamers, or candy.

Get crafty.

Check out UrbanSitter's Fun Valentine's Day Crafts for Kids. If you need more ideas, you'll love Martha Stewart's roundup.

Do good.

Do you know an elderly neighbor or friend who might not have a Valentine to celebrate with this year? Make his or her day by delivering a bouquet of flowers and a homemade card.

Snuggle in for family movie night.

There are many cute Valentine's Day movies for kids, including: "Beauty and the Beast," "Ever After," "Lady and the Tramp," and a sweet compilation of some of Disney's best couples - "Mickey & Minnie's Sweetheart Stories."

Tie on your aprons and whip up a special dessert to enjoy after dinner.

You can't go wrong with these impressive-to-look-at, even-more-impressive-once-you-bite them brownies from Smitten Kitchen. For something simpler, try Raspberry Cream Cheese Heart Tarts from Weelicious.

Choose a few Valentine's Day books to read together before bed.

- ♥ Happy Valentine's Day, Curious George by N. DeAngelo.
- ♥ I Would Tuck You In by Sarah Asper-Smith
- ♥ Fancy Nancy: Heart to Heart by Jane O'Connor

Source: urbansitter.com



Having Faith cont. from pg. 1

Parents are often caught off-guard when hard questions begin to surface. They may be surprised by the complexity of the questions and not know how to respond. If your teen gives you the silent treatment don't assume she doesn't want to talk with you and is only interested in sharing with her peers or other trusted adults. Your daughter might appear emotionally distant, even when she desperately wants to talk to her parents. Adoption issues can be emotional, and discussing them will require patience. Respect your child's feelings. She might want to discuss something that is uncomfortable for you. For example, meeting her birth parents. If this is hurtful or uncomfortable for you then try to understand your feelings separate of your daughter with the intention of being fully present for your daughter. Be ready to share all the information you have available regarding her adoption. Many parents want to shield their child from painful aspects of their past. However, as a teen, your child needs to know as much as possible about her birth family. You can help your teen make sense of difficult information and offer your emotional support.

Below are six things adopted teens think about and the questions that arise.

1. **Feeling different.** Why is my family different from families where all members look similar?
2. **Reason for adoption.** "Did I do something to cause my birth parents to give me away?" "Why couldn't they solve their problems and keep me?"
3. **Missing Information.** "What do my birth parents look like? Do they think about me or know how to find me?"
4. **Identity.** "Who am I? Am I more like my adoptive parents or birth parents?" "How can I figure out who I am if I don't know much about my birth parents?"
5. **Loyalty.** "I'll upset my adoptive parents if I ask questions about my birth parents." "I worry about my siblings who are growing up in different families."
6. **Permanence.** "If my birth parents gave me away, could it happen again?" "I'll be 18 soon. Will my parents still be here for me after I leave home?"

Thank You!

Kids & Families Together would like to thank the wonderful and gracious people and organizations who generously helped us and our families these past few months.

Andrew, Paula and Joseph (their son) Barbieri

Foster VC Kids for your support with the Hold Me Tight Couples Workshop

Youth Group of St. Jude's Catholic Church for their teen care bags

We thank you so very much!



Training Opportunities

from Ventura County Community College District's Foster & Kinship Care Education

The 5 Love Languages of Children (West County)

**February 7th and February 21st 6:00-8:00pm (2 parts)
Day Road Training Center @ Ventura College 71 Day Road
(Large Training Room)**

Every one of us has a primary language of love, a way that fills our "love tank" better than any other. In this class series we will utilize the best-selling book *The 1 Love Languages of Children* by Gary Chapman & Ross Campbell to inform our understanding of the love languages of the children in our care. Please RSVP to rcarlson@vcccd.edu.

Youth Mental Health First Aid (Central County)

**Tuesday, February 21st and Thursday, February 23rd
8:30am-12:30pm OR 2 Days: Tuesday, February 28th and
Thursday, March 2nd 8:30am-12:30pm
Channel Islands Social Services
5251 Verdugo Way Suite G, Camarillo**

Sometimes, first aid is YOU! Youth Mental Health First Aid is a free 8 hour training course (two 4-hour sessions) for adults working with or caring about youth (12 to 18+ years of age) that may experience mental health challenges, substance use, anxiety and/or depression. Participants will learn to support youth who may be developing a mental health disorder. Warning signs & symptoms, risk factors and protective factors will be discussed. Pre-registration is required. Childcare is available through pre-registration.

For more information on these classes you may call Ventura College at 805-289-6327 or Oxnard College, 805-986-5800 ext. 2018, or send an email as indicated.

K&FT Staff Spotlight: Emily Spiker

Our staff members play a critical role in maintaining the everyday flow of Kids & Families Together. They are kind, nurturing and here to serve their community



1. What is your role at K&FT and how does it impact the organization?

I'm a TVC clinician and my role is to help foster a secure attachment between children and their caregivers. Another role I hope to embody is to be someone who creates opportunities for these families to have joyful, fun, and loving experiences.

2. Describe yourself in one sentence.

I want to live life fully, with a heart filled with love, and help people to live a life that has joyful moments, self-acceptance, and connections with others.

3. What's something most people don't know about you?

When I was around 10 years old I was obsessed with being a spy; I used to hide on my roof and count the number of times cars would drive by and note their license plate. I would then use a fancy walkie-talkie to let my family members know about these shady drivers.

