

Get ready to shift into low gear after Christmas

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Christmas has come and gone and the memories linger on. We often get so caught up in the day, that we forget that our challenge is to pass on the remembrances of our childhood Christmas's gone by to the fast-paced society of today.

When we change and adapt we often make brand-new memories that are unique to our lifestyle and our family. Part of the fun following Christmas is listening to the stories and tales of those we work and live



with. They make us smile and they provide us with inspiration for our next Christmas or family gathering. Spending less money on our kids

and more time is a goal for which we all strive. I guess this column is about the three R's, remembering, rejuvenating and relaxing with our children. Remembering our childhood, rejuvenating that 'loving feeling' that comes around at Christmas, and relaxing with our family, can help us realize that this moment in life only comes by this once.

The new year is a perfect time to make your family aware of time with the calendar and the clock. Time is

what the New Year is all about. Letting out the 'old' and bringing in the 'new'. Renewing is sometimes just as important as recycling. Have a resourceful and renewing New Year.

New Year's Pinata

Reinforces: shapes, motor skills, following directions, and creativity.

Need: one inflated round balloon, wallpaper paste, strips of newspaper, pin. Fill the finished pinata with coins, balloons, stickers, gum,

erasers, peanuts in the shell, boxes of raisins, small cars, hair ribbons, sticks of gum and erasers. Broom or hockey stick to hit pinata with.

Preparation: Early in the day, cover an inflated balloon with several layers of strips of newspaper, dipped in powdered wallpaper paste. (premixed with water). This is wet and messy so the kids and adults will love it. It will take a day or so to dry so plan ahead. The next day, puncture and remove the balloon with a small sewing needle or pin.

Decorate the pinata brightly with paint, tissue paper, feathers, ribbons, leftover wrapping paper or Christmas cards. Glitter and stickers look great as well. When it has been decorated make a two small holes near the top of the pinata for a heavy string to hang it up by. Before putting it up, use the holes to fill the pinata with the treasures mentioned above.

Activity: At your party or celebration — hang the pinata where there's lots of room. Everyone then takes a turn trying to break it (blindfolded) with a broom or hockey stick.

Memories in pictures

Reinforces: cutting, kneading, measuring, and visual discrimination and following directions.

Need: Salt Dough Mixture — 2 cups flour, 1 cup of water, and 1 cup of salt. Knead ingredients together with hands. You want it to be smooth as Playdoh. You will also need some photos of your family at play or on a special occasion, scissors and white glue.

Preparation: Roll out the salt dough about 1/8th of an inch thick. Use a juice glass or can to cut a circle. Cut faces from some of your photos in a circle slightly smaller than the juice can or glass. Place the photo in the center of the salt dough circle. Fold the edge over the picture, crimp or press down with a fork and poke a hole in the top to hang it by, or wait till it is baked and add a piece of magnetic strip so it can be hung on the fridge. Bake, picture and all at 300 degrees until hard, about 1 hour. Write your name and date on the back with a marker.

This is a nice gift for Grandma or a special friend after Christmas to wish them a Happy New Year.

Count Those Good Deeds

Reinforces: counting, graphing, more, less.

Need: bristol board or tag board, ruler, pencil and crayons.

Preparation: Make a calendar with your child, leave space on the left hand side of the calendar. On that side write down some jobs around the house that your child can do each day. The jobs should be easy, for example, make my bed, brush my teeth. Have the children decorate the calendar. Talk about the New Year being a time to try new things and to do things in a new way. Decide on a time period for the Good Deed board. For smaller children a week of Good Deeds may be all they can handle.

Activity: Each day have the child mark off the job under that day. You can use stickers or crayons to make it more interesting.

Letter Writing

Reinforces: language development, writing/printing skills, organizational skills and story telling.

Need: Plain paper, old Christmas cards or pictures cut from magazines, pencils or markers, someone to write to.

Preparation: Before children are ready to write have them design personalized letter paper. Show them some types of letter paper and let them use their imagination. They can cut out pictures from magazines to decorate it or use pictures from the old wrapping paper or cards.

Activity: Having someone to write to and about is an important part of writing for adults and children. Christmas provided a nice opportunity for the whole family to sit down and write letters or cards of thanks for gifts or time spent together over the holidays. Children have experienced a lot and therefore have a lot to tell about.

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