

Family History Activities and Resources for Children and Teenagers

While some people enjoy digging through the past to discover “lost” family, others do not. For those individuals, family history is still something that can be shared with children; however, instead of going back generations, they can focus on their immediate family and/or on the children themselves. Here’s how: ¹

STORYTIME

Caregivers can tell stories about their life. By filling these tales with interesting details, humor and/or unusual facts, children’s imaginations are captured. Sharing family stories can be an everyday occurrence, happening around the kitchen table, in the car, or at bedtime.

FAMILY PHOTOS

Pictures make the past come alive. Children especially enjoy pictures showing how fashions and hairstyles have changed over the years.

FAMILY HISTORY GAMES

Games make family history fun. Families can make up games specific to them, such as a trivia game, a matching game or bingo. Children can even help create the game.

POP CULTURE THROUGH THE AGES

Music and movies from the past are another way to reach young people. Share music from different eras. Teach children some of the dances their grandparents used to do or listen to the songs their great-grandparents used to sing. Watch movies that were popular during an ancestor’s lifetime or that portray a certain period in history.

FAMILY FOOD HISTORY

Throughout history, food has been an important part of holidays and family gatherings. Either using family recipes or preparing dishes from different countries where ancestors originated is a great way to connect children to the past.

FAMILY HISTORY FIELD TRIPS

Children of all ages love field trips. A family history field trip could be across the country or just down the road. Visit places where ancestors lived or worked, explore cemeteries, visit museums or living history exhibits or celebrate ethnic heritage at a cultural festival.

TALK WITH OTHERS

Older family members will often share stories with children that they have not told other adults. Encourage children of all ages to talk to their living relatives, especially the older ones.

If grandparents are not an option, a caregiver/parent would work too. Hearing stories about what life was like in the past helps young people learn about the past and connect to the present. This connection also brings generations together and establishes strong bonds.

Older children and teenagers can interview relatives and record them if they like. Some questions they ask could include:

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- Where did you grow up?
- What were your parents like? Your siblings?
- What do you remember about your grandparents?
- Who were your friends?
- What was school like for you?
- What did you do for fun when you were little?
- What movies and songs did you like when you were young?
- What important lessons have you learned in your life?

TELL THEIR OWN TALES

Children and teenagers document their own personal histories. Their stories matter too, not only to themselves and their family but to future family members. Younger children draw pictures about the things they enjoy or special times they have had. Older children and teenagers can keep a journal or write stories from their lives. They can also create a scrapbook or photo album; using a camera, phone or handheld device, they can photograph events and/or family members.

SOURCE

¹ *Involve Children and Youth in Family History*. (n.d.).

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OTHER RESOURCES

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