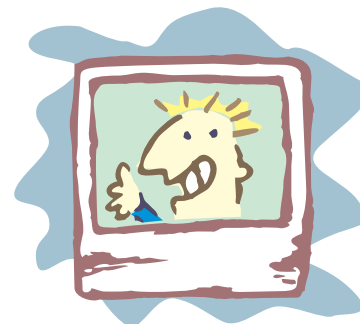




Making Memories



| BY ROBIN DEROSA LUNDGREN |

Memory boxes are a great way for kids to capture memories of a special time. More detailed than a photo album, yet not quite as elaborate as a scrapbook, a memory box can be any size box or container that is decorated and filled with photos and trinkets from a specific event. In this month's activity, kids will enjoy collecting and displaying their memorabilia and having a chance to put their creativity to work.

Putting a memory box together is a quick, simple project, making it a better option for kids than a scrapbook, which can be an ongoing and more time-consuming project.

Children can make memory boxes to commemorate a special event or time in their lives, such as a birthday party, the first day of kindergarten or a family vacation. A birthday party memory box might include a picture of the birthday child, list of guests, birthday cards received, a party favor and perhaps a written account of what happened at the party. A trip to the zoo might include an admission ticket, a map of the zoo, a trinket or postcard purchased at the gift shop and some photos.

The best thing about memory boxes is that they are simple enough to be put together by children of all ages. Very young children might fill their box with things they've collected - ticket stubs, photos, drawings. Older children's boxes could also include written accounts of what they did, to accompany their memorabilia. As you help your child assemble items to include in a memory box, you may decide to make one yourself! It's a great way to preserve your family history.

What You Need:

- A sturdy box or container (shoebox, plastic bin, etc.)
- Decorating items - markers, crayons, stickers, photos, drawings, paint, glue, etc.

- Items to include in the box, specific to theme or event. (Make sure they fit in the box and are non-perishable.)
- Paper and pen for written accounts.

What to do:

1. Help your child identify an event in her life to highlight in her memory box. What made that event special? Why does she want to remember it?
2. Have your child choose a box and decorate it. Encourage him to be creative, making a box that reflects his theme.
3. Assist your child in collecting items to include in her box. If the event is in the future, help her identify things to get for her box. For example, if she is going to see a play, she will want to take pictures at the theater and be sure to keep her ticket stub and program.
4. If your child is old enough to write, encourage him to include a written account of the event he is showcasing. Point out to him that someday he might enjoy reading what he writes about his experiences as a child.
5. When your child's box is finished, encourage her to share its contents with friends and family members. Help your child to store her memory box in a safe, but accessible place so she can revisit her memories whenever she wants.

How this Helps:

Cognition: the mental process of knowing by developing awareness, perception and reasoning. In this activity, children's cognitive skills are engaged when they make choices about what to store in their box and sequence events in a written narrative or out loud for others to hear. As well, children are strengthening their memory by reviewing events.

Fine Motor Skills: the use of small muscle movements in the hands that occur in coordination with the eyes. This project enhances fine motor skills through writing, drawing, cutting, and gluing. Fine motor skills are also utilized when kids write or type an account of their special day.

Language: the expressive ability to communicate ideas and needs, and the receptive ability to understand what is said or written. This is a language-enriched activity because of the ongoing conversation about memories. Parents can further facilitate discussion by using new vocabulary and asking questions for their children to answer. "What was your favorite memory? Tell me more. What makes this picture special to you?"

Social Emotional Development: involves a child's feelings of self worth, confidence and pride, as well as their ability to get along with others in a group setting. Everyone loves to recall favorite days filled with fun, family and friends. Children will take great pride in their box of tangible memories that they create themselves and can share with others. It will be a family treasure for years to come.

This monthly family activity series, "Hands-on Kids!" is brought to you by a partnership between the Children's Museum of Northern Virginia (CMNOVA) and FAMILY Magazine. For more activities you can do with your children to spark their love of learning, visit the CMNOVA web site, www.cmnova.org. On their web site you will also find information about the Children's Museum of Northern Virginia and how you can become involved. CMNOVA is committed to building a place where our children can freely explore and develop a lifelong love of learning. Robin DeRosa Lundgren, a CMNOVA volunteer, is Vice President of Aquarian Entertainment and creator of the kids' cooking show "Culinary Kids".