

Eight Nights of Fun and Meaningful Hanukkah Celebrations

Choose 1, or choose 8!

Here are double the number of ideas you need to inspire your family's Hanukkah celebrations. Turn Hanukkah into an opportunity to convey your values to your children. And resist (at least a little) the "give me" trap of the holiday season.

Game Night – Unwrap a new deck of cards or unearth Candy Land from the toy closet. Zingo and Snails Pace Race are TBANS favorites. Even 2 year olds play "Feed the Monkey." Puzzles count. The gift is in playing together.

Sports Night – Yoga or Hot Potato in the basement. Hockey or basketball at the stadium. Enjoy the shared activity.

Craft Night – Do a project, whether it's decorating wrapping paper for a charity, making photo collages of family or friends, or tie-dyeing t-shirts. You can even get creative with "loose parts" (ask a teacher).

Traditional Night – Celebrate Hanukkah with dreidels, latkes, and gelt. Make an edible menorah or edible dreidel or cook sweet and savory latkes. Play Hanukkah music. Being Jewish is fun!

Book Night – A new book to read to your child or a chapter book to read aloud as a family. Make up stories, or act one out.

Self-Care Night – Colorful bath beads, a new toothbrush, or even a sock organizer. Help children gain independence, and pride.

Family and Friends Night – Welcome others to celebrate Hanukkah with you. Children learn to be gracious and helpful hosts. They can also write Thank You notes to express gratitude for the gifts others give to them.

Community Night – Attend one of many community Hanukkah celebrations or concerts. Enjoy being part of the larger Jewish community.

Giving to Parents Night – Children get to give you a gift. Store bought, or home made. They find joy in making others feel special.

Tikkun Olam (repairing the world) Night – Do something as a family to fix our world, whether it's picking up trash along a stream, drawing pictures for soldiers, or making sandwiches for a shelter.

Giving (or Charity) Night – Children choose new or gently used items to wrap and give to those in need - Toys for Tots or Rescue Dogs. Draw cards for hospitalized patients. Donate outgrown clothes. Giving is even better than getting.

Music Night – Have a sing-along or a dance party. This is the great equalizer for parents and children!

Shabbanukkah – Temple Beth Ami’s name for the Friday night of Hanukkah. Enjoy a special Shabbat together – Challah, chicken soup, and two types of candles make a perfect and meaningful evening.

Nature Night – Stargazing, family hiking, visiting a farmer’s market to try an unusual vegetable, or going on a treasure hunt for natural objects. Appreciating and reconnecting with nature is said to be one of the surest avenues to mental well-being.

Experience Night – Choose something new to try as a family. Ice skating, or painting pottery. Do something out of your norm.

Shared gift night – Give a gift for the family to share – a new puppy! A new car! Or how about an ice cream sundae bar, or a hot air popcorn machine. Something everyone can enjoy together!

Have Fun!

If you search the internet, you may find more ideas. I chose those that seem manageable for families with young children. As children age, there are many more options. In my family, we got to the point where the “Hanukkah Present” was a short winter-break trip, because it was all about doing something together, and the 8 nights of Hanukkah were enjoyed with candle lighting, playing dreidel and making lots of latkes! I look forward to hearing some of your ideas.

Happy Hanukkah, Paula