



Soulful Home

Finding the Sacred in
Our Everyday Spaces



January 2019 - Possibility

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The Welcome Mat

What Does it Mean to be a Family of Possibility?

As we grow up, we begin to move from a worldview where anything at all is possible, to understanding the concept of limits. It's a slow and bittersweet shift, made over decades as we come to understand probability, the laws of physics, social norms, our own gifts and challenges, etc. What a delight this month, then, for the adults in the family to consciously revisit the wide-open, childhood space where anything and everything could be!

In this guide, we relish in possibility: We imagine countless possibilities with a family choose-your-own-adventure day. We consider probability and possibility in an old-school card game-- Rummy--that our elders likely knew and loved. And we sneak Post-its of Possibility throughout our homes to remind us of what is possible that we may not be able to perceive with our senses alone. Though our focus is on fun and joyfully imagined futures, we also acknowledge the challenge of supporting one another through the disappointment of a possibility that closed for us, of a limit reached; for this, we learn a bit about "The Fear of Missing Out" in the Kitchen Sink section with our co-parents or friends, refocusing our efforts on the possibilities that really, truly matter to us.

In a 2018 stand-up routine, comedian Chris Rock told a story in which he chided a high school vice principal for telling incoming freshman that they could be anything they wanted to be; the possibilities were endless. "Tell the kids the truth," he said. "You can be anything you're good at, as long as they're hiring. And even then, it helps to know somebody." How does a parent decide when to encourage children to dream big, and when to offer a reality check, to limit their imagined possibilities? We accompany one another through this tender terrain this month, too.

A family of possibility lives in an exciting world, one where everyone's individual gifts, talents, skills, wisdom, and quirks come together to create moments that defy assumption and expectation. What's possible this month? We can't wait to find out!

Alexis and Teresa,
Your Soul Matters Family Ministry Coordinators



At the Table

Exploring Possibilities Through Discussions

At the Table questions explore the monthly theme through a discussion for all ages. They are designed for a family gathering - maybe during a Friday night meal, a quiet moment in the living room or before a board game night. These questions are designed with different ages and intellectual stages in mind, so use the questions you think will be the most enriching for your family and feel free to adjust them as need be. The more complex and abstract questions are usually placed at the end of the list.

Introducing the Activity

Family members who are readers can alternate who reads the questions. Those who are not readers are invited to share their own impromptu questions. Discussion partners might answer as thoughts come to them or take turns in a circle.

1. What do you wish was possible but isn't? Are you sure?
2. Do you like having a bunch of possibilities to choose from or does that kind of overwhelm you? For instance, would you rather have an entire isle of candy to choose from or just 3-4 choices? When choosing a movie, would you rather be the one that goes through all the options and proposes the top 3 to the family or the one who waits for the top three and then votes on those?
3. What possibilities do you hope turn into realities this new year?
4. What possible "bad thing" do you hope doesn't happen?
5. Is there something you are hoping to do but need some help? What type of help do you need?
6. Who do you think can make more things possible, kids or adults?
7. Is it possible that the thing you want is not the thing you need?
8. What seemed impossible at one time but is normal for us now?
9. Why do you think grown-ups sometimes stop believing that things are possible?
10. Is "That was unfair!" or "I was wronged" keeping you from the possibility of moving on?
11. What does it take to make hard things possible?
12. What are your questions?



Discussion Support

Some of these questions may provide an opportunity for your family to explore how children and young adults are making a big difference in the world (i.e. creating new possibilities). If your discussion goes in that direction, here are two stories you might want to share:

1. Young people are holding their governments responsible for climate change:

Here's an article about it: <https://qz.com/1334102/kids-around-the-world-are-suing-governments-over-climate-change-and-its-working/>

And here's a video:

https://vimeo.com/306081056?ref=fb-share&1&fbclid=IwAR0-4U4FIUjUcmuLSVL-wle623Ple0yloK_mp1FHqcDfVBJ0eH6Bsnf-kXE

2. Young people are addressing school shootings. Here are some links about the powerful voices for change and new possibilities that emerged from the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, and Miami Northwestern High School, also in Florida:

- <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/miami-northwestern-high-school-student-walkout-kimson-green-killed-shooting>
- <https://www.cnn.com/videos/us/2018/03/24/emma-gonzalez-full-speech-march-for-our-lives.com>

Ways to Return to the Discussion Throughout the Week

Thoughts develop with time. So here are some questions to continue your discussion about possibility as the month progresses:

- Are there questions that you would answer differently than you did at first?
- Are there things you want to add to your initial thoughts?
- Did someone say something that made you think your own new thought?
- Did your family discussion lead to similar discussions with friends?



Around the Neighborhood

Hunting for the Possibilities All Around Us

Around the Neighborhood activities engage families with their surroundings through the lens of the theme. It's about perceiving your well-known world in new ways. Just take our monthly treasure hunt list with you on your trips to the grocery, walks around the neighborhood or bike rides, and transform your everyday travel into a family adventure. This month, we suggest three different types of treasure hunts:

#1: Hunting for the Possible on Construction Sites

Be on the lookout for new construction or demolition in your neighborhood. Take a walk by and then imagine...

- What might be being built there?
- Why do you think it's coming down?
- If you were building something there, what would you build?
- Imagine: Even though we know machines and people did this, what magical beings *could* do this and why?

Be on the lookout for empty lots in your neighborhood. Take a walk there and imagine...

- What used to be there?
- What could be there someday?
- If you were building something there, what would you build?

#2: Hunting for New Ways Home

During the month make your drives home into a hunt for...

- How many possible ways are there to get home? Let's spend the month adding them up!
- Everyone's favorite way home. Family members can take turns deciding which route to take.

#3: Hunting for Possibilities in the Sky

See how many things you can find in the clouds while on various trips:

- Clouds from the windows of home
- Clouds from a car
- Clouds from a family walk/hike

Consider what story might be in the sky? Is there a group of clouds that looks like an event, such as a horse jumping over a fence, knights dueling, or a space expedition?

Some stories, like myths, are used to explain how something came to be. What fun myths can you create to explain what is in the sky? (For example, how did the sun get up there? Why do we only see stars at night? What makes a rainbow?)

Reflection

Sometimes looking at familiar things in new ways makes us think new thoughts. Hearing other people's ideas (such as what might be under construction, another route home, or what a cloud looks like) can help us think about things we might not have considered on our own. Think about how what makes us unique influences the way we look at things like construction sites and clouds and celebrate the special perspective each family member brings to the different activities. Take turns as a family complimenting each other about the special ways they perceive things.



At Play

Playing Games with Possibility

At Play activities and questions are a way to joyfully, playfully, and imaginatively experience the theme. We offer a brief framework to introduce the game and another to reflect upon it, so that the insights learned in play can stay with us throughout the month and beyond.

Option A: Playing Rummy

Card games are rare among playful pastimes in that they are just as likely to be found in middle-school cafeterias as they are in nursing home rec rooms. There's usually a bit of a learning curve, but once players get the basics down, the potential to make connections across two and three generations is powerful.

Rummy is a fairly simple card game in which players consider the possibilities of being able to make matching sets or runs of cards, given what they see on the table in front of them and what they can guess about other players' hands.

Here are the rules of basic Rummy, written out (Note that rummy has many variations, and if your family plays one of those variations, feel free to use what you know!):

<https://www.bicyclecards.com/how-to-play/rummy-rum/>

And here is a video of the basic Rummy gameplay and rules:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQHwHCHl0kI>

Especially if you or some of your players are learning the game for the first time, talk through your thought process on your turn: "OK, I laid down my three of a kind. Now I'm looking around the table to see if anything else is possible before my turn ends..." This engages other learning modes (visual, auditory, interpersonal).

Younger family members learn the value of inclusion and adaptation when they're invited to join in with the big kids and grown-ups. Here are a few tips for playing with younger children:

- Very young children can be an older player's "partner," and help spot matching numbers in a hand.
- Give a young child spare game pieces that, while technically unrelated to the game you're playing, can be integrated without compromising the rules. (Dice, figures, a timer, buzzer, etc.)
- If a younger player feels disadvantaged or frustrated by not being able to play as well as others, offer to switch hands of cards.



Learning the rules of a card games means learning what is possible in a given context. This is a significant part of growing up, or for older children, for learning “adulting.” Within the rules, what can one do to exercise power, gain advantage, use strengths, and create opportunities? The game of Rummy also involves probability, manipulating the wide field of possibility to learn what is likely and what we are willing to risk.

Option B: Colorful Possibilities

For the activity below, you’ll need just a few craft supplies such as paper, masking tape or painter’s tape, white paper, and watercolors.

Activity: <https://kids-finelines.blogspot.com/2012/05/kindergarten-ooos-and-ahhs.html>

Encourage your child/ren to be curious: What happens when we combine this color with this color? What about adding this one? What do we do when what happens is not what we expect? We can play with possibilities without knowing exactly what will happen. Experimenting while being open to whatever happens can be a helpful way to encourage a sense of playfulness, rather than pressure, in exploring possibilities.

Share your creations with family members and friends. You may even set up a “gallery” to display your special work. Younger children may enjoy doing the activity as written, but older children may want to use the above technique on larger sheets of white paper to create handmade wrapping paper for gifts or for covering books.



On the Message Board

A Monthly Mantra

The On the Message Board section lifts up a theme-related mantra for your family to carry with them throughout the month. Think of these “family sayings” as tools for the journey, reminders that help us re-focus and steady ourselves and our kids as we navigate through life’s challenges and opportunities. Write them on sticky notes to put in your car, on kitchen cabinet fronts, in lunch boxes, on computer screens and, of course, on your family message board. Share them out loud at home and out in the world, where and whenever the need arises.

January’s Mantra:

“Maybe. But What Else is Possible?”

In the field of museum studies, educators use what’s known as Visual Thinking Strategies to help students engage critically with works of art. The educator, when presenting a new piece, asks students, “What’s going on here?” When given an answer, the educator goes further: “What do you see that makes you say that?” The point is to move from the wide-open field of everything that’s possible, to the refined place of what’s likely, based on observable evidence. Then, the educator invites observers to look again: “What else do you see?”

Sometimes, our children get stuck on upsetting possibilities: Nina didn’t invite me to be in the game because she doesn’t really like me. Dad’s airplane might crash. People don’t like us because of who we are and they’re going to try and hurt us. They also bring a lot of limiting assumptions to their experience: I don’t want to go because I won’t know anybody there. Why bother trying out for the team? I’m no good...

Instead of trying to convince children that what they’re thinking isn’t real or isn’t likely, consider asking your kids “What do you see that makes you say that?” and then saying something such as, **“Maybe. But what else is possible?”** This helps break the pattern of scary or limiting what-ifs and moves children into thinking more critically about their perceptions of reality and to begin or continue using observable evidence when drawing conclusions.



At the Bedside

Stories About Possibility

The Bedside activities engage the theme through storytelling. This takes place during the dreamy, almost otherworldly hour or so before children or youth drift off to sleep. Through stories and the questions and realizations that they prompt, we learn how to better navigate our own stories and appreciate how rich life's story really is.

A Story to Share: Trees for Kenya

Kenyan Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai saw possibility in communities of women acting together for the health of their own lands and people. She was jailed for being a visionary and an agent of change, because her speaking and acting for what was possible--rather than for the status quo--challenged people in power. Read her story together at bedtime:

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/multigenerational/trees/workshop8/288840.shtml>

After reading about Maathai, consider sharing other stories you know (either from your own reading or from your family) about the following:

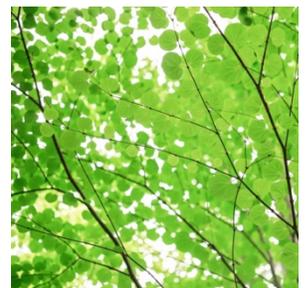
- Something precious, like the fig tree, that is worth protecting because of what it makes possible
- Someone or a group of people not giving up, even when those around them say what they are trying to do isn't possible
- A time in which it felt like there were no possibilities but how that feeling changed

After-reading reflection: "Anything Can Be"

Evening Reflection: After spending time with the above, read this short poem entitled "Listen to the Mustn'ts" by Shel Silverstein:

https://www.poetrysociety.org/psa/poetry/poetry_in_motion/atlas/portland/listen_to_the_mustn/

The last line, "Anything can happen child, anything can be" is one that supports the theme of determination in Maathai's story. It can also open the door to a sacred time for your child/ren to share their hopes and for you to listen. Ask your child/ren what they hope for and remind them that you are there to support them. You may learn about concerns you can help alleviate either by simply listening or by problem solving with your child. This may be done every evening, or at the end of the month as your child takes time to think about what is possible in their own life.



At the Kitchen Sink

Raising a Child of Possibility Together

At the Kitchen Sink supports sharing realizations, challenges and hopes around the theme with other supportive adults. It connects parents with their co-parents, with their close circle of supporters, or both. Perhaps this happens as the dinner dishes are washed and dried, or perhaps this is where parents and their circle of support, cup of tea or coffee in hand, talk over the soulful parts of parenthood.

Part check-in and spiritual practice, and part shared reflection on the specifics of parenting your particular children at this particular point in your lives together, this section invites listening, talking, thinking, and naming feelings around the month's experiences

High, Low, and Tomorrow

When you and your partner get together at day's end or you and a trusted someone connect during your weekly meetup, alternate sharing the following:

- **Your High:** What was the best thing that happened today (this week)?
- **Your Low:** What hurt or challenged you the most?
- **Your Tomorrow:** What are you most looking forward to tomorrow (in the coming week)?

Once the paradigm is known to all, anyone can start the conversation with, "What's your high, low, and tomorrow?"

Taking a moment to clarify and share our highs, lows, and hopes can be a catharsis and energizer at the same time; we give voice to difficult feelings and disappointments, asking a partner or friend to bear our burdens with us for a short while, but we also speak aloud that which brings us joy or satisfaction, reminding ourselves where it is we want to spend more of our energy.

Kitchen Sink Questions

- Of all the Soulful Home activities or discussions you tried this month, which ones went particularly well? Which had the most meaning for you? Which do you think will have a lasting impact?
 - At the Table Questions
 - Around the Neighborhood treasure hunt
 - Playing Rummy (or another card game)
 - Using our senses to play with color
 - Learning about [At the Bedside]
 - Using the Message Board Mantra



- What parenting challenges did you face this month? How did the packet's activities or theme influence how you experienced and dealt with those challenges? Did thinking of yourself as a family of possibility guide or help you in any way?
- What was your greatest insight about what it means to be a family/parent/child of possibility?
- What activity from the packet might you want to make a regular, annual or on-going ritual?
- You made a number of memories this month as you explored possibility with your children. What was your favorite and why?

A Note of Encouragement & Something to Explore Together:

As we prepared materials for our theme of possibility, we were reminded of both the gifts and challenges that accompany possibilities - especially as parents who make choices not just upon what we want, but as guardians of young lives who are influenced by the choices we make. Thinking about what we have done can bring up questions about what we might have done differently had systems, circumstances, wisdom, or luck been different.

You're invited to watch this video called "Fear of Missing Out" with your parenting partner or support person. It explores how our perception of the possibilities before us can augment or thwart our own feelings of happiness and contentment. It may also be a video to show children who have moments in which they too are afraid of "missing out" - such as that party they did not go to or the trip that did not work out for some reason.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VrC_MSG9zSU

It can help to know you are not alone in wondering in what is being missed while experiencing gratitude for what is and excitement for what might be. We wanted to remind you of that.

Love,

Teresa and Alexis



The Extra Mile

Making Time for Bigger Possibility Adventures

The Extra Mile section is for families who want to continue exploring the theme of the month through larger adventures, more complex projects or simply through additional modalities not otherwise included in the packets. The Extra Mile suggestions often surpass what is considered an “everyday moment” in a family, and may involve more preparation, planning, or time to accomplish. A bit more effort, but well worth it!

Extra Mile #1: Posting Possibilities

For this activity, you will need something to write with and sticky notes (post its, or slips of paper, and tape for extra reinforcement).

Count how many light switches you have in your home. Then, think about what family members hope will be possible in the year to come. Record the possibilities that family members hope will become realities this year (one per sticky note) and tape them next to each light switch. You’re encouraged to think beyond personal improvement and achievement goals by considering blessings of possibility you all can hold as a family. For example:

- What do you hope becomes possible for a loved one?
- Is there something you want to become possible for people (even those you may not know personally) going through a difficult time?
- Do family members have personal hopes for the year ahead that will help make other goals possible, such as a hope for courage or peace?

Every time people use the switch, they can remember the possibilities they are working toward or that someone they love cares about. Keep these about the house for as long as you wish.

Extra Mile #2: Possibility with Riddles

When you open a riddle book, answers are given, but sometimes we can think of answers to riddles that aren’t the answers the authors created but could also be correct. Let’s play with the idea that there are many possible answers to the same question and not worry about what someone else thinks is right or wrong. As you play with the riddles in the link provided (or maybe find your own), consider which riddles only have one right answer and which ones could have several possible answers.

<https://www.riddles.com/best-riddles>



Extra Mile #3: Choose Your Own Adventure Day

A central task of Soulful Parenting is helping our children become authors of their own adventurous lives, to cultivate the kind of boldness that leads them to make hard choices and see them through. Choose Your Own Adventure Day invites children into the co-creation of fabulous fun and memory making.

[Choose Your Own Adventure](#) was a children's book series, wildly popular from the late 1970s through the 1990s, where the reader made choices at the end of each chapter that led them to different, parallel story lines, changing the plot and the ending of the book.

We're borrowing this concept for some real-life family fun! In your Choose-Your-Own-Adventure Day, you'll practice noticing and naming exciting possibilities, then doing the tough job of narrowing down possibilities into commitments, into choices.

Parents should begin by brainstorming the kinds of activities that would be possible and mutually agreeable. It might help to set some parameters or create a desired outcome: "We want to spend no more than \$40 on our fun, and \$20 on a donation of some sort." Or, "We have Sunday afternoon to dedicate to this--4 hours--and we want to ask Grandpa to come along." Then, consider activities that meet your criteria. You'll want to establish some choices and leave others up to circumstance. And, bring a handful of index cards with you so you can record the choices the family makes.

For example, let's say it's a cold and wet weekend, so you settled on a first choice of two indoor activities: "Shall we go ice skating, or to the movies?" Let's say the children choose ice skating. You go ice skating.

As your ice-skating adventure is winding down, ask, "Shall we go home and have some warm cider, or stop at the store and get supplies for making hot cocoa?" They choose cocoa.

At the store, ask, "Shall we pick up some canned goods to donate to the food bank, or should we go next door to the big box store and buy socks and underwear to donate to the shelter?" You may have a few other choices in mind before your time dedicated to this adventure ends.

The children may enjoy making up choices, too. And, they may want to do both of the two choices you offer. They might argue over the choices, in which case, you'll want to establish ahead of time how you'll handle decision making. (Voting, with parents as tie-breakers? Rock/paper/scissors? Pick a number and then phone a friend to guess the number?) Approach this activity with some forethought but hold your plans lightly; different possibilities may come up that deepen or change the adventures you had in mind.



Now, time to collect and reflect on your choices. When your adventure is complete, review your stack of index cards with the choices on them together as a family. (In our example, ice skating, hot cocoa, donating socks and underwear, and if the day had continued, maybe taking a walk after dinner, reading “The Velveteen Rabbit.”) Ask your children how they feel about the day. Point out how, when the day began, it was full of possibility, and how, with cooperation, they were able to take that possibility and make choices together to create a day of fun and interesting experiences. Acknowledge any hard feelings about missed opportunities or disappointing choices. If there are hard feelings, this might be an opportunity to use this month’s mantra: “Maybe, but what else is possible?” Even though we might not have done everything we wanted to do today, what might be possible in the days to come?



A Blessing for You & Your Home

Blessings to you, guardians of dear ones full of so much potential. May you feel energized and restored from the long winter nights as you prepare for a new year, with new possibilities for yourself and your family.



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to these monthly resource packets
on our website:

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