

**THE WEEK OF MEMORIES:
7 DAYS OF DEFINING
MOMENTS**



CHIP HEATH & DAN HEATH

A resource for the book THE POWER OF MOMENTS

INTRODUCTION:

A NOTE FROM THE HEATH BROTHERS

If you follow the instructions in this short document, you will create one of the most interesting and memorable weeks of your year. We have chosen 7 “peak” moments for you, one per day. All 7 of these activities are things that you can reasonably plan and complete within a week. And all 7 are “small” things in terms of the time investment required. Yet they are designed to have a strong emotional payoff for the amount of work involved.

Here’s the mistake some people are going to make: They’re going to read this document and think, *Hey, that sounds like fun. I’ll come back to that as soon as this project ends. As soon we get to the holidays. As soon as my life slows down.* Or, these well-intentioned people will start the activities and complete a few of the easy ones but procrastinate the ones that take a bit of work. *I’ll get back to those later when I think of something.*

Don’t be those people. Let us give you a little pep talk: We are offering you the chance to create an unusually meaningful and memorable week for yourself and your family. What could be more important than that? Why would you delay it?

Let us forewarn you: There are a few activities that you are going to resist at some level, whether conscious or unconscious, because they may make you feel slightly uncomfortable or vulnerable. This week, you may have to take a risk. You may have to do something unfamiliar. You may have to expose a real feeling to someone. :) We can’t say this more clearly: That is the point of this mission! It’s precisely the novelty and vulnerability of some of these activities that will make them meaningful and memorable. You can’t “opt out” of the hard parts and expect to have an amazing week.

Trust us. We thought through this “program” very carefully. Stick with it. Put in the work on a daily basis to make it happen—don’t let the urgencies of everyday life crowd out your chance to make memories. If you are willing to do that, you will be shocked at how much positive emotion can come from a few small investments of time.

Are you with us? Can you make a commitment to yourself that you’ll spend THIS ONE WEEK fighting to create moments that matter?

Because here’s what we suspect: After you experience this week of memories, it may change the way you spend all the weeks that follow.



A MOMENT OF ELEVATION

Today's homework:

Today you've got a lot of advance planning & brainstorming work and one big treat. If you do your work today, the rest of the week will fall into place naturally. Here's what you'll do:

1. Read this full document so you understand the flow of the work.
2. Decide who you will deliver your "gratitude letter" to and make plans to see them (or talk with them) on Sunday. (See Day 7 for instructions.)
3. Make plans with your partner or a good friend to have dinner on Friday night. (See Day 5 for the plans.)

Today's mission:

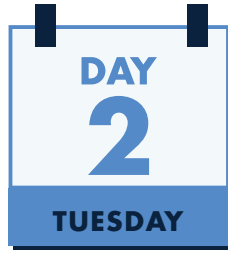
Tonight, your assignment is to bring together three things that bring joy to you or your family. You're looking for triple decadence: Pizza + ice cream + mini golf? Red wine + a bubble bath + a legal thriller? Kraft Mac & Cheese + all the pillows in the house piled on the floor of the living room + a scary movie? (More debauchery is welcome but this is a family publication.) If you don't get a little bit excited thinking about the trio you've chosen, you need to pick again. You can heighten the fun by surprising your partner or kids with the trio.

How it ties to the book:

You're creating a peak moment by boosting sensory appeal and breaking the script (Chapters 3 & 4).

What to notice:

Notice how the anticipation of the triple-decadent moment can be as much fun as the moment itself. It's elevating to plan peaks as well as to experience them.



A MOMENT OF RECOGNITION

Today's homework:

Look ahead to Day 4 (A Moment to Deepen a Tie). This is a more difficult activity to “plan” than the others since it may hinge on a spontaneous interaction. So you need to be ready to seize the moment. To make yourself ready, write down 2-3 names of people that you’d like to know better. As you go through the week, be alert for opportunities to go beyond small talk with any of them. If you think it would make your life simpler to plan an activity with one of them (such as lunch), rather than waiting for an improvisational moment, please feel free to do so.

Today's mission:

Today, you will praise someone for a talent they have or for work they have done. It might be a co-worker or a neighbor or a friend or a student. Prepare what you’ll say in advance. Two to three thoughtful sentences will probably be just fine. (Don’t just make a drive-by comment like, “Nice work on the McAllister account, Dave.”) Tell them what you noticed—be specific—and how it made you feel. Here’s an example: “Sarah, I just wanted to let you know that I noticed how hard you’ve been working to get us organized recently. The way you outlined the whole process was really helpful. It helps my anxiety levels to know you’re paying attention to everything, and I wanted to say how much I appreciate it.” (Note: You can choose to praise one of your children, if you like, but if you praise them frequently, you need to “up the ante” so it feels more like a Moment. Perhaps sit them down and look them in the eyes as you deliver the praise.)

How it ties to the book:

See Chapter 7 “Recognize Others” for inspiration. If you work with kids, re-read the Kira Sloop story and remember how much your words matter.

What to notice:

In the book, we discuss how even a seemingly “small” compliment is often remembered for years afterward. So it’s clear that you are creating a powerful moment for the person you’re praising. But we want you to notice how good YOU feel afterward. Can you find ways to ensure that you’re more generous with recognition in your life and work?



A MOMENT OF STRETCH

Today's homework:

1. You should have your Friday dinner & Sunday visit scheduled by now.
2. Keep watching for your opportunity to Deepen a Tie (Day 4). That conversation could happen any time during the week; it need not be on Day 4.

Today's mission:

Today, you will commit yourself to a “stretch”—that is, a commitment to do something you want to do that exposes you to the risk of failure. It must be a concrete commitment. If you want to get better at public speaking, a stretch is NOT to say, “I’m going to look for more opportunities to speak.” A stretch is to make a specific commitment to give a presentation at your company’s next meeting. If you want to do more writing, a stretch is NOT to jot down some ideas of topics you might write about it. A stretch is to send a note to 5 trusted friends and tell them, “In 2 weeks, I’m going to send you a short story, and I would really appreciate your candid feedback about it. I’m trying to grow as a writer.” (That way, you’ve made your intentions public and you’ve set a deadline.) You can also choose an “emotional stretch”: You could agree to go with your partner to dance lessons, or to participate in couples counseling (assuming you have been resisting those things). The test of whether you’re really stretching is: You feel a little twinge of anxiety at the commitment you’ve made. If there’s no twinge, there’s no stretch.

How it ties to the book:

See Chapter 6 “Stretch for Insight” for inspiration. Remember the Lea Chadwell story: Even if you ultimately “fail” in what you choose to do, you will still gain self-insight, and that learning can be as beneficial as “success.”

What to notice:

Notice how powerful your resistance can be to stretching. Stretching exposes us to risk and failure, and our guts resist that. The tug of war can be intense: Part of you wants to commit to a more ambitious stretch, but another part of you fights against it, nervous about how you’ll look if you fail. Fight against the urge to make your stretch so weak that it’s essentially a sure thing!



A MOMENT TO DEEPEN A TIE

Today's homework:

If your Saturday Surprise requires any advance planning, make sure you've done that.

Today's mission:

Sometime this week, when you're having a conversation with a friend or family member, push intentionally beyond small talk. Share something real—maybe it's a challenge/struggle you're facing at home or work. Make yourself vulnerable and trust that your partner will reciprocate, allowing you to take the conversation to a higher level.

How it ties to the book:

See pages 245-246 and the story about Mike Elam for inspiration. The broader concept is that we build intimacy in relationships by taking turns: One person makes him/herself vulnerable, and the other reciprocates, and that cycle of reciprocity deepens the relationship.

What to notice:

Notice how exposed you feel when you share something real—even if it's not exactly a family secret. Strengthening relationships requires effort. But often it's surprisingly little effort—notice how readily people will open up to us if we open up to them.



A MOMENT OF CONNECTION

Today's homework:

Have you written your gratitude letter yet for Sunday? It will take an hour or two of focused time to write the letter, so make sure to carve out time in your schedule.

Today's mission:

You are going to try the Art Aron experiment that we described in Chapter 11. Make plans to have dinner tonight with your spouse or partner. If you're not in a relationship, pick a friend or family member who you'd like to get to know better. If you're really brave, you could try this on a date – [see this New York Times article](#) for one story of someone who tried it. Before dinner, download the app 36 QUESTIONS. (If you can't find that app, here is your Plan B: Go to nytimes.com/36q.) Do not read the questions in advance. Over dinner, discuss the questions one at a time. You should both answer each question before moving on. Resist the urge to skip questions or give jokey answers. Be real. (Remember yesterday's lesson about 'turn-taking'.)

How it ties to the book:

See Chapter 11 "Deepen Ties" and specifically pages 241-246 about Art Aron's experiment and the notion of "turn-taking."

What to notice:

Notice how great it feels to be talking about things that matter with someone you trust, and how you emerge from the conversation feeling bonded more tightly to them.



A MOMENT OF SCRIPT-BREAKING

Today's homework:

None, unless you need to finish your gratitude letter.

Today's mission:

If you're like most people, your Saturdays tend to follow a "script." The details might change a little but the routine is similar: You wake at a similar time, eat similar foods, do similar activities, etc. Today's mission is "Saturday Surprise." Plan a day full of things that "break the script": new activities, new topics of conversation, new trips. If you need inspiration, consult the resource on our website called "The Power of Moments for Friends and Family" – it's loaded with ideas. You might also consider what one of our readers did: She asked her daughter to plan the full day, and she was amazed with what she (the daughter) came up with.

How it ties to the book:

See Chapter 4 "Break the Script" and especially the discussion of "Saturday Surprise" on pages 77-78.

What to notice:

Notice how the day felt longer. Not in a bad way, like you're watching the clock, but more like, "I can't believe it's only 3pm – it feels like we've packed in so much already." Novelty slows down time and increases memorability.



A MOMENT OF GRATITUDE

Today's homework:

None.

Today's mission:

You will share a gratitude letter with someone who is important to you. Here are the instructions for the exercise, as given by the psychologist Martin Seligman:

Close your eyes. Call up the face of someone still alive who years ago did something or said something that changed your life for the better. Someone who you never properly thanked; someone you could meet face-to-face next week. Got a face?

Your task is to write a letter of gratitude to this individual and deliver it in person. The letter should be concrete and about three hundred words: be specific about what she did for you and how it affected your life. Let her know what you are doing now, and mention how you often remember what she did.

PLEASE try to visit the person face-to-face. If that is absolutely impossible, do a video chat via FaceTime or Skype or another tool. It's important that you see each other's faces. (As a last resort, you can do a phone call. Better a phone call than nothing. But you will lose a powerful part of the gratitude visit if you can't see each other. And DO NOT just send the letter in the mail or via email! This is a MOMENT we're creating between two people.)

How it ties to the book:

See our discussion of the gratitude letter—along with a specific example written by Paul Glassman—on pages 155-158.

What to notice:

So many emotions. Notice how nervous you may feel just before you deliver your letter. Sharing feelings can make us vulnerable. And of course you may experience powerful emotions as you read the letter and as you watch the recipient's reaction. Let those tears flow. Afterwards, you will feel the rush of satisfaction that psychologists write about. It's a bit of a miracle, isn't it? You created a defining moment for someone who was special to you, and yet YOU come away feeling like a superhero. That's the magic of gratitude.

AFTERWORD

Did you finish the week? We hope you had a profound and memorable experience.

If you completed all 7 of the activities, we'd like to make you an offer. Email us at brothers@heathbrothers.com and share your reflections on each day's work. A few sentences or a short paragraph is fine for each one. What happened? What was hard and what was easy? How did the activities make you feel? Do you feel like anything will change in your life moving forward?

If you are willing to share your reflections with us, we'll send you a small gift to show our appreciation. (We welcome reflections from anyone on any topic, but the gift is reserved for people who complete all 7 activities in one week.)

We hope these activities helped illustrate the most important theme of our book: All of us can be the authors of defining moments.