

# THE POWER OF MOMENTS FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY



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A resource for the book **THE POWER OF MOMENTS**

# INSPIRATIONS FROM OTHER CULTURES

## Milestone birthdays across cultures.

In the U.S., milestone birthdays tend to be linked to new freedoms. 16, the car. 18, the vote. 21, the booze. In other countries, milestones are viewed differently. In Nigeria, milestone birthdays are 5, 10 and 15. In Holland, they're 15, 20 and 25. In Japan, the luckiest birthdays are at age 3, 5 and 7. *(Thinking in moments, milestones)*

## Alternate birthday foods.

Why not try celebrating a birthday with a tradition from another land? In China, instead of cake, celebrants eat “long life noodles” which are supposed to promote a long, vibrant life. The more noodle you slurp, the longer your life will be. Australians eat something called fairy bread (in addition to cake) – it’s white bread slathered in butter and doused with sprinkles. *(Elevation, breaking the script)*

## Special birthday traditions.

In Russia, a birthday isn't so much about the gifts as it is the cards. Not just a simple happy birthday card will do. It needs to be handwritten, with genuine expressions of affection, wishes for health or success. In some places in Canada, friends swipe the person having a birthday with butter across the nose! In Jamaica, people throw flour in the face of a birthday boy or girl. In Peru, friends pull a birthday person's earlobe once for every birthday. *(Thinking in moments, milestones, Elevation, Connection)*

## A special celebration for the 60-year-old.

The sixtieth birthday is the occasion of kanreki, when five cycles of the Chinese zodiac, have completed, and the person is said to be reborn. During kanreki, the birthday person has a party with a cake decorated with white cranes and red turtles. The white cranes are a symbol of 1,000 years, and the red turtle represents 10,000 years. A sleeveless red jacket is given to the 60 year old. This jacket is called a chanchanko and it represents a baby's jacket and a return to the beginning of life. (*Thinking in moments, milestones, Pride, Elevation, Connection*)

## And 50-year-olds too!

One of our favorites is the Dutch tradition of putting up a giant inflatable male or female character outside the home a person turning 50. They are said to be going to Sarah or Abraham (Biblical figures) when they reach that fantastic age.<sup>1</sup> (*Thinking in moments, milestones, Pride*)

## Coming of age in dangerous ways.

Other coming of age traditions in other cultures are far more brutal. Many involve circumcision – usually in public and certainly without anesthesia. We'll spare you those. (*Thinking in moments, transitions, breaking the script, peaks, stretch, Pride, Connection*)

- The Kenyan Luos have six of their bottom teeth removed – a sign of courage and a way to identify with the tribe.<sup>2</sup>
- On Vanuatu, a small island in the Pacific, the young men construct crude wooden towers, then tie themselves with vines that allow them to “land dive” toward the ground. A successful land dive allows a young man to touch the ground but the danger is obvious. Younger boys land dive from shorter distances at lower perches on the towers.<sup>3</sup>
- Ethiopia, young men become “maza,” or men, on the backs of four large bulls. The young men hop onto the first, wearing little more than a few traditional cords across the chest, and run back and forth across the backs of the four bulls three times as the surrounding crowd cheers.<sup>4</sup>

## Coming of age in less dangerous ways!

In the northernmost reaches of Canada, Inuit boys and girls around 11 or 12 years old are taken by their fathers for a weekend of hunting and fishing as part of an age-old rite of passage, or initiation into adult responsibility. Girls also mark their readiness for adulthood with tattoos on their faces and elsewhere to show that they have learned the skills needed to begin life as an adult.<sup>5</sup> Amish youth are encouraged, starting around age 16, to explore life outside their quiet home communities in a period called Rumspringa. They may go live in a city, or travel abroad, before returning home to be confirmed in the church ready for adult responsibilities.<sup>6</sup> (*Thinking in moments, transitions, breaking the script, peaks, stretch, Pride, Connection*)

## Cherokee coming of age ritual.

There's a wonderful Cherokee story about a boy sent out into the woods as part of his coming of age ritual. Accompanied by his father, he is blindfolded and led deep into the woods. At one point, the father halts the boy and instructs him to sit on a boulder or tree stump. The boy is instructed to leave the blindfold on throughout the night, not to call out or cry for help, not to peek, not to wander away. Then the father tells the boy he is leaving. Night falls and the boy is overwhelmed at the sounds coming out of the wood. He is frightened. But he does not remove the blindfold. He does not cry out. He does not peek or move. At daylight, the boy removes the blindfold with relief - only to see his father sitting nearby on another stump. He had been there all night.<sup>7</sup> (*Thinking in moments, transitions, breaking the script, peaks, stretch, Pride, Connection*)

## Create your own coming of age ceremony.

Transitions are valuable opportunities. If your culture doesn't have the equivalent of a bar-mitzvah or Quinceañera, borrow an outline from a friend and recreate it for your kids. You might serve different foods or select different inspirational readings, but take the outline and the mix of activities seriously and you will have created a defining moment that will benefit from decades or centuries of cultural wisdom. (*Thinking in moments, transitions, breaking the script, peaks, stretch, Pride, Connection*)

# DEFINING MOMENTS FOR FAMILY

## Using souvenirs as “treasure chest” items from vacations.

What souvenirs will you and your kids remember from the vacation? The sweatshirt in the souvenir shop for \$60 may seem extravagant, but what if it reminds your child regularly of the \$2000 vacation you just took? (One former colleague had a husband with an over-the-top view of souvenirs. He would insist on buying a major furniture item each time! Problem: It reduced the number of vacations because the bar felt so high. And, presumably, at some point you start running out of space.) *(Peaks, Elevation, treasure chest mementos)*

## Break the script for bedtime books.

Try to rewrite your child’s favorite story from the villain’s perspective. This goes from Horton Hatches the Egg (Maizie probably had a good reason to skip town, or maybe she got lost!) all the way to Harry Potter (no doubt Voldemort had a very difficult childhood.) *(Break the script)*

## Break the script in your marriage.

Art Aron had couples engage in a date a week for ten weeks. One group did a standard date. For example a couple that habitually went to dinner and a movie would have dinner and a movie. Another group did something different than what they would normally do. If they normally see romantic comedies, they might take in a horror film or an action/adventure. If they normally ate Italian, they might try Vietnamese. The biggest increase in marital satisfaction was among the novelty group. *(Break the script, Elevation, Connection)*

## Offering wisdom on anniversaries.

On the most romantic of occasions, speak truth to young marrieds. Consider the 75-year-old woman helping to assemble table decorations for her 50th anniversary party. Her daughter sighs at how romantic it is to be in love with the same man for so long...The elder woman brings them up short: “You know there were plenty of days when your father and I didn’t like each other.” In other words, love is a decision; it’s a commitment; don’t expect it to be roses and violins every day for 50 years. Yet the payoff is worth it. *(Milestones, Insight, Connection, deepening ties)*

## The power of an unexpected “Yes.”

Your teenage son asks you to play Mortal Kombat (okay, maybe not Mortal Kombat) or FIFA soccer on his Xbox One. You say, “Yes. Show me how.” Your daughter asks you to let her style your hair and do your makeup. You say, “I could use a new look.” (This goes for both moms and dad – no scissors allowed. And no permanent or semi-permanent hair dyes.) You walk past the bubblegum machines at the grocery store and your kindergartener asks (for the millionth time) for a gumball. You say, “No way. We’re not getting a single bubblegum ball. We are getting three. Pick your machines.” *(Breaking the script, Elevation, Connection)*

## A sudden reprieve from chores!

On Saturday morning announce over breakfast that not a single chore is to be done that day. Instead, everyone is going go-kart riding, or paddle boarding, or snooping around at the flea market, or visiting the animals at the SPCA. But no toilet bowls, laundry, weed-whacking or window-washing. Period. *(Breaking the script, Elevation, peaks)*

## The midnight chat.

Despite your generally militaristic adherence to bedtime schedules and the “no getting out of bed rule,” you occasionally wake up your child (not on a school night – let’s say summer) at 11 pm and together put together a plate of “party food.” Olives, slices of cheese, nothing fancier than a Ritz cracker. Use toothpicks with the little bits of cellophane at the end to spear each treat and talk about something fun – like your favorite vacation, or your favorite animals, or the scariest thing you’ve ever done. *(Breaking the script, Elevation, peaks, Connection)*

## The hidden milkshake.

A little girl is in the hospital and the doctors can't quite figure out what's wrong. She's running a fever, and they are worried. She is on a diet of no solids and that means, every single morning, a bowl of cream of wheat on a tray. She cannot stand cream of wheat. Her father knows this. So on her second morning in the hospital he hustles into the room and from under his overcoat he pulls a large chocolate shake! "Trade ya," he says. And on every morning she is in the hospital it goes like this. He eats her cream of wheat, and she drinks the shake. He leaves the empty bowl on the tray. Many years later, she can barely remember being in the hospital, or the many tests they conducted. But she can remember her father pulling that shake out from under his topcoat with a smile. (*Elevation, peaks, Connection*)

## The body-shake advancement ritual.

At Karate International, Sensei Rob Olevsky is a strict taskmaster, but not without a sense of humor. A time-honored tradition in his dojo is that when every child advances to the next belt, he or she participates in the monthly advancement ceremony. This is serious business. He or she is recognized, and participates in a group display of the work being done at that level; then he or she receives his or her new belt (the tying of said belt can be really tricky when you're four years old). When your new belt is firmly knotted, you approach Sensei Olevsky. He hands you a certificate to recognize the move to the new belt level and then – he shakes the child's hand up and down with such vigor that many of the kids are stunned. It lifts them, and about knocks them over! But it is a tradition. It says, this is difficult, this is a challenge, and good for you, you met the challenge. It becomes a pride moment, this pumping of the arm, that ends when the child becomes a blackbelt. During that ceremony, Sensei breaks boards – on the child's body, head, feet, knee, shoulder – as he or she completes a kata in slow motion. The goal is not to flinch, and not to pause. (*Thinking in moments, milestones, Pride*)

## Families that stretch together...

Build moments of pride in your family without breaking boards over your child's head (even when tempted.) Set a challenge that everyone in the family, or just a few of you, can buy into. Make it the huge rollercoaster at the state fair, a hike up the stairs of your city's tallest building, a whitewater rafting trip. Try geocaching in a part of town you seldom visit. (*Stretching, Pride, multiplying milestones, Connection*)

## Embrace the hardest chore.

Better yet, make the moments of pride meaningful by connecting them with work at home – or for others. In your own home, pick harder chores, and more challenging tasks. Clear out the brush behind your house, including hacking down a few small trees (if age and level of responsibility will allow it). Rent a power washer and clean a driveway, or deck, or shed (practice before anyone aims for the house). Sand woodwork near a home’s entryway, and put the first coat of paint on it. The jobs that they hate the most – the ones that sound the hardest – will be the ones they talk about for years to come. For others, just doing the dishes in the sink, or running the Hoover across all the floors, or mowing the lawn, can be huge. These are moments that can be transformative for a young person. *(Stretching, Pride, peaks, group struggle, Connection)*

## The DJ Night.

Everyone—grandparents to kids—searches Spotify and names a song that reminds you of something important. Tell what it means to you and play the song. Everybody sings along if they can. *(Elevation, peaks, Connection, Insight)*

## Couch surfing with a mission.

At home: Netflix and chill. No! Accomplish something instead—master complete seasons of classic shows. Work through top 50 family movies ([Common Sense Media: 50 Movies All Kids Should Watch Before They’re 12](#)). Or married couples could work through the [top 25 of the American Film Institute’s list](#) or [Metacritic’s list of 100 all-time favorites](#). *(Multiplying milestones, breaking the script)*

## Turn vacations into quests.

Vacations are good, but why not do something that cumulates? Sports fans could visit every major league baseball stadium (and take a picture of the same view—e.g., the batter looking past the pitcher’s mound to the fan seats). The National Parks program has a “passport” that lists spaces for all the national parks, and every park has a ranger station with a special passport stamp from that park. No better source of elevation than seeing the beautiful landscapes. *(Multiply milestones, peaks, Elevation, Pride)*



## On vacations, plan for peaks.

A 9 day vacation is the same as a 6 day vacation if the six days are spent doing the same old, same old. Skimp for a few days so you can splurge on some peak moments on other days. (And don't forget that not all peaks require more resources—a marathon walk across a whole city, or a day spent “stretching” on some unfamiliar activity, might well be “peakier” than an expensive meal or tour.) *(Peaks, Elevation, breaking the script)*

## Track marital accomplishments.

See the “anniversary journal” idea in chapter 8. In marriages, couples should keep a yearly notebook of accomplishments (things we accomplished: rooms redecorated, big parties thrown, projects completed, trips taken, etc.). *(Pride, multiply milestones)*

## Making birthday parties “peakier”.

We should move beyond cupcakes and games *(Elevation)* among the presence of friends *(Connection)* and add Pride and Insight. What if kids marked their current height against a door frame (to see how much they've grown)? What if they opened a “time capsule” (a manila envelope) and looked over the math homework they were doing two years before (“so easy!”), and the list of TV shows that were their favorite (“So silly!”)? What if every year they filled out a card with the one insight they wanted to remember going forward? And selected two cards from the time capsule from previous years? *(Peaks, Pride, Insight, multiply milestones)*

## Celebrating anniversaries.

Go beyond flowers and dinners out. Relive classic moments in your relationship. Try recreating the meal you served at your wedding. Or recreate your first date. Play music that you listened to during your courtship, watch your wedding video, or page through an album. Or create an entirely new tradition: Celebrating with Thai food? A “splurge” bottle of wine? Or, every year, do something you've never done before: Take dancing lessons. Go to an independent theater production. Take a Cajun cooking class. Finding that you still love to spend time together, and that you still want to learn and grow together, is the goal. *(Thinking in moments, Elevation, breaking the script, stretching, milestones)*

## Creating a peak for a retiring colleague.

To mark the day of a colleague's retirement, put together a retrospective visual or audio. Or both. Pull photos and stories from the year (or date!) that he first started at your coalmine. Make a playlist of songs from that era. Add a few photos from that earlier time in his career, even if it was with another firm. Have his closest friends sign something of significance to your field, with a light heart. A pocket protector. A nurse's cap. A fake roster. A menu. *(Thinking in moments, transitions, Elevation, Connection, responsiveness)*

## The un-wedding ceremony.

At Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, a longtime member and her husband were in tremendous pain. The wife had determined, after 20 years of marriage, that she was gay. They turned to Pastor Nancy Petty for counseling. She suggested a ceremony - part funeral, part celebration. She called it an un-wedding. The couple, soon to be parted, picked the date. Their children and siblings attended. They laughed and cried at the memories. They expressed their love, and they said solemn words as they removed their rings and returned them. *(Thinking in moments, transitions, Elevation, Connection)*

## The bridging ceremony.

At Montessori schools all over America, students mark the major transitions in their education with something called a "bridging ceremony." These ceremonies are celebrated a host of ways - with a literal bridge the students cross, to more metaphorical walks from the entry of one building to the entry of the upper school, for instance. The ceremonies celebrate important moments without creating graduation fatigue - lessening the meaning of the ultimate graduation with a graduation from preschool, kindergarten, fifth grade, etc. *(Thinking in moments, transitions, Peaks, Elevation, Pride)*

# MOMENTS OF CONNECTION: HAVING DEEPER CONVERSATIONS

*All of the topics below are linked by common elements: turn-taking, Connection, responsiveness, making yourself vulnerable*

## Having deeper conversations with your family

- Pits and peaks: Everybody describes the peak (best moment of the day) and pit (worst moment) of their days. It's a good summary of how the day went, and it's completely consistent with how our memories work.
- Sad, Mad, Glad: Describe something today that made you sad, that made you mad, and that made you glad. In general people will list three different things for the three emotions but occasionally you get overlaps. This produces a slightly wider range of topics than pits and peaks. It's especially useful for kids who are learning to map their internal reactions to social situations onto emotional vocabulary.
- At Christmas: Not only go around and open presents but ask everyone to name something they are grateful for. If responses are too generic ("thankful for good friends"), ask people to name a specific person outside the family who they are thankful for.
- On New Year's Day. Everybody describe an accomplishment from last year (celebrate and be proud before you turn around and set the next resolution.)
- 4th of July (for Americans): What is the story/incident in American history that most inspires you? (Adapt the date and country for where you live.)

## Having deeper conversations with friends

The Proust Questionnaire has been used to great effect on the [final page of Vanity Fair magazine](#) for decades. It was based on a parlor game in France popularized by Marcel Proust (who, in his day, was even more popular than Art Aron)

### Here are the questions:

1. What is your idea of perfect happiness?
2. What is your greatest fear?
3. What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?
4. What is the trait you most deplore in others?
5. Which living person do you most admire?
6. What is your greatest extravagance?
7. What is your current state of mind?
8. What do you consider the most overrated virtue?
9. On what occasion do you lie?
10. What do you most dislike about your appearance?
11. Which living person do you most despise?
12. What is the quality you most like in a man?
13. What is the quality you most like in a woman?
14. Which words or phrases do you most overuse?
15. What or who is the greatest love of your life?
16. When and where were you happiest?
17. Which talent would you most like to have?

## Conversation starters with younger kids

- What superpower would you most like to have, and why?
- What's your favorite kind of bean?
- If there were one kid in your school that you could snap your fingers and move to (Antarctica, the Moon, the town five miles away) who would it be? Why?
- What is the funniest thing a teacher ever did in class? Was it on purpose or by accident?
- What is the funniest thing a kid in your class ever did? Was it on purpose or by accident?
- Does your teacher(s) treat everyone the same? Do you think everyone should be treated the same?
- What is the (dumbest, most boring) book you have ever read? Why? What is the very best one? Who was the main character in the book?
- What was the most embarrassing time you ever had? (Parents or older sibs or loved ones start – with confessional of farting during naptime in kindergarten, or falling asleep on a stranger's shoulder on an airplane and drooling, or looking at a guy across the class and catching his eye and blushing like a tomato, etc.)
- What is the funniest word but not a naughty word (every family has their own set)? Parents and older sibs can start. Be prepared for some silly talk – Moist, honk, flatulence, razzamatazz.
- If you caught a friend trying to cheat off your paper, what would you do?
- Would you rather be an elephant or a mouse?
- Would you rather be a fairy or a princess?

## Conversation starters with older kids

- What are the different groups (*cliques*) at school?
- Who are the “popular” kids at school? What makes them “popular”? Who decides who gets to be “popular”?
- What did you think the (preacher, rabbi) meant in the message today? What did that tell you about how to (be a better person, etc.)? Do you think he/she did a good job?
- (All ages!) Who is the best cartoon character ever? Why?
- If you had to eat only one food and one drink for the rest of your life, what would they be?
- If you could repeat one year of your life, which one would it be?
- Would you rather have all the money in the world and no friends or no money and lots of friends? Why?
- Would you rather be dumb and happy or brilliant and miserable?
- If you won the lottery, who would you give some of the money to and how much?
- Can you think of a single movie that was better than the book?

# “SATURDAY SURPRISE” EXAMPLES

In Chapter 4 of the book, on page 78, we described an exercise called the “Saturday Surprise.” The instructions were simple: Break the script on your Saturday routines. In the book, we shared several examples of the Saturday Surprise, but here are more actual reports:

## Hike on the Oregon Coast.

“We ‘broke the script’ by heading to the Oregon Coast. One highlight was a hike on the Sweet Creek trail head. It was about 12 miles off the main road. We do not typically go off the main road to see things. It was definitely more meaningful. We talked about “breaking script” and how routine can make life less meaningful and not as impacting. Time did seem to slow down a bit. One of my hobbies is photography, so I was taking picture along the trail, which added to the focus and meaning of the walk.”

## The sighting of the owl.

“My wife and I have two adult married children. One lives in our town, the other lives three hours away. During the week before Easter, I was looking at this exercise and thought, ‘We need to drive to visit our kids who are away. That would break the script.’ ... So 6+ hours of travel to spend 4 hours with our kids. But it would count as breaking the script for a Saturday.

... The six hours in the car meant that my wife and I had more sustained time for talking than we normally would have. Because we are in a job/life transition, this space was very helpful. And when you are traveling you can’t wander away and do other projects around the house, which is what we would have done had we stayed home.

We went to a deli near where our kids live. Our daughter-in-law is a regular there. Our son had never been there. My son and I got to run together for a mile to help me continue my 300+ day running streak (*old script, new setting*).

The most memorable moment of the whole trip was seeing a large owl in our kids' backyard. They live in campus housing (our daughter-in-law works in residence life): a house with a backyard that adjoins a wooded part of campus. There are deer and a variety of birds, but we watched the owl land in a pine tree and watch us.

The book Owl Moon is a big deal for our family. It brought healing after the death of a child, and the name for our next child. But we had never seen an owl that close. And it wouldn't have happened if we hadn't broken the script that says, "It's too far to drive on a busy weekend."

And this observation: Breaking the routine for my wife and me also broke the routine for our kids. These changes can have implications beyond the relational unit where they originate."

## New perspective on Los Angeles.

"I spent the day in a part of town where I haven't spent any time since moving here to Los Angeles: downtown. We spent literally all day down there – close to 8 hours. Walked everywhere. Tried so many new places, including new restaurants for lunch and dinner. Saw new parts of town. Went to two new museums. Went to the largest bookstore in the U.S. It was amazing."

## Day planned by daughter.

*[Mentioned in the book on page 78.]* "My way of changing the script was to let my daughter plan a family fun night instead of us doing our usual weekend activities. She did not need much coaxing. She took a lined notepad and wrote down her plan of activities hour by hour. It started in the afternoon, and she had a time and an activity next to it. There was time for outdoors, to play board games, time for dinner, and time to watch a movie. On the day, she was in charge of selecting what was done, like which board games we played, and of keeping us on track. We put her in control. At some points we exceeded the time on her schedule, and she made the call to keep going, because we were having fun. We ended up doing just about everything on her list, and it was a big hit. I was impressed by how she scheduled the activities (a future project manager?). She really seemed to enjoy thinking it



through and then having her day of favorite activities chosen by her. We'll definitely repeat this activity, as we had fun as a family, and we all learned a little bit more about ourselves and each other. I want to keep it special so I'll let some time pass before we do it again (or figure out how to change things up for the next one). The only other thing I would add is that by having this day, we ended up spending more time together as a family. Otherwise we would spend a lot of time by ourselves on the phone, tablet, or laptop, in between our usual weekend activities. We talked interacted more as result (instead of texting)!"

## Letting the to-do list wait.

"A typical Saturday is for me to get up and go to the gym, come home and have breakfast while my wife is getting ready, then she eats, goes to a standing Sat morning appointment, then we go grocery shopping, and things go from there. In this case, she rescheduled her appointment, we went to Panera for breakfast and then headed to a local park for a short hike. We noticed several things: Rather than thinking of the start of the day as something to 'get past to get to the real stuff,' we found that we talked about some things that we didn't get to very often, and that was cool. It also felt like going hiking vs taking on a regular routine activity was almost like playing hooky - something fun vs task-focused. It was a little more challenging for my wife than for me - she's very much of the 'work first, then play' person, whereas I think play is good lots of the time. There were still some things we didn't get to that day, but then there's always more to do than one can fit in, right? We did decide that going to breakfast out was something we'd do again."

## Fire trucks and pizza.

"My wife and I have five children ages 7 and under. We used a day when they were on Spring Break and told them that Dad had to go to work. I left the house for 5 minutes and then surprised them by coming back home and ringing the front door. We told them we were going to the Fire Truck Museum in our city. They have never been before. They were very excited to get ready because they thought they were just spending the day at home. When we got to the museum, we arrived a few minutes before it opened. Just playing on the sidewalk in anticipation, we had some really sweet moments. The museum itself was a great experience and they loved exploring every part of it. I had good moments connecting with each of the kids as they asked me questions and we experienced the exhibits together. For lunch, we took them to a pizza buffet. (I'm sure more fun parents have taken their kids to these many times, but it was our first time). The younger kids seemed indifferent about

it, and that was a little frustrating. So in that since, time did “slow down,” but not in the way your literature was encouraging. It was kind of in the “the-parents-are-ready-to-wrap-this-up” kind of way. My oldest child, however, LOVED it! My 7 year-old daughter thought it was the greatest thing ever. She and I kept going up to the buffet. More than pizza, she wanted to keep going back for olives and tomatoes. This distinction among the rest of her peer group in the restaurant was noticeable, but she was happy, so bring on the olives! Talking with her about her choices and going back and forth to the buffet created some great moments. ... The break in routine definitely created some good moments.”

# DEFINING MOMENTS FOR FRIENDS

## A dinner club with friends.

Brian H. writes: “We were part of a group of five couples (the “fab five”) who would have dinner together roughly every three months. Each couple would sign up for a course, appetizer to dessert and serve it with wine or other appropriate alcoholic beverage. So the wines were always great as was the food. There was typically a theme, for example, one theme was “breakfast” (the crème brulee French toast was great), one theme was “Fall” and people used pumpkins and squash and fall vegetables. One was modern, upscale versions of food from childhood (e.g., onion rings from Vidalia onions with a BBQ rub and tempura-cornmeal batter, or “hamburgers” with ground short ribs served on home-baked buns). We had some really good cooks so people knew they would be eating at least one or two amazing dishes during the course of the evening. Just as important as the food was the conversation. We would sometimes chat about any topic but about half the time we would put effort into pushing the conversation deeper, for example by drawing question cards from games devoted to better conversations (e.g., the Ungame).” (*Elevation, break the script, Connection, Responsiveness, turn-taking*)

## Defy the norms of your friendship.

Do something random or unexpected (*breaking the script*):

- Fly a kite. If it goes too high, tie it to a tree branch and walk away.
- Go rollerblading.
- Take a hot yoga class together.

- Play chess.
- Throw a Nerf football
- Many more ideas [here](#)

## Plan a peak around a common interest.

You run together at lunch? Pick a weekend race and knock it out. Go for breakfast after. Better yet, get a team together and compete against other workplace teams big and small (think, Mom Bloggers v Google geeks) (*Elevation, raising the stakes, breaking the script*)

## Look for occasions to celebrate.

Do you grab lunch at the takeout and eat at your desk? Find ways to create special occasions to bring people together: Raheem is back from paternity leave. Sarah is getting a promotion. Parker completed her first marathon. Have everyone bring in a dish (store bought or homemade) and commandeer the conference room for an hour. Talk about the event, but also revel in the friendships that make work enjoyable, or endurable. (*Elevation, thinking in moments, peaks, Connection, responsiveness*)

## Set a group goal.

Plot a communal quest. Climb the stairs in your office building EVERY DAY at least once – and check in with one another. When you get to 30, 60, 100 days, meet for lunch at the vegan chopped salad place – or eat a red velvet cupcake in the elevator as it goes up and down. Recruit a group to do a no-drink January. Commit to learn a language together and enjoy the clumsy foreign-language small talk in the hallways. (*Pride, multiply milestones, Elevation, Connection, shared mission*)

## The “roots” pot luck.

Crib from the schoolhouse: Have a holiday party where everyone in your pod, or your team, or your neighborhood, or your preschool parents group, brings food or drink from the culture they grew up in or identify with. Make sure everyone fills out a little index card explaining what you’re eating/drinking and more importantly, why. (*Peaks, Elevation, Insight, break the script, Connection, turn-taking*)

## Moments when paths diverge.

Create intentional moments when your life and your friends’ lives go in different directions, or when you find yourselves at different stages of life. You could either celebrate the “fork in the road” by hearkening back to something you used to do together: wandering the farmer’s market, enjoying an afternoon of paintball. Or you could invite your old friend in to see what your world is like now. Make her a cup of tea, and give the twins a bath before asking your spouse to put them to bed, and let your friend absorb your new lifestyle: littered toys, dishes, chaos and love. (*Thinking in moments, transitions, responsiveness, Connection*)