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**News of the World**

Read online at: [www.austinfamily.com/films](http://www.austinfamily.com/films)



Jo and Isabelle strike a peaceful pose for the New Year. Photography by Jordan Ashley Photography.



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**41 Ways To Spread Cheer in the New Year**

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## EDITOR'S note

ANNETTE LUCKSINGER

*Lucksinger is a mom of two and author of the guidebook and app Exploring Austin with Kids.*

January provides that rare mix of peaceful reflection with the excitement of adventure. I always appreciate this time of year when, for a brief moment, we straddle the past and the future. Reflecting on the previous year, I am grateful for people met, lessons learned and a sense of closure that opens the way to fresh encounter.

This year brings with it continued uncertainty, but also a huge dose of hope. My two children have been learning virtually since March. I wonder whether my senior will finally get to drive his freshman sibling to class,

or if they will remember their last year at home together spent studying in their bedrooms down the hall. Looking back on 2020, we are grateful for the inevitable closeness it has brought at the same time that we look to the future with optimistic anticipation.

On the horizon sit great reasons to welcome in the new year with a renewed sense of peace and hope. The articles in our January issue celebrate exactly that. We invite you to learn ways to find peace through play. Try practicing family mindfulness and meditation exercises together. Examine how you can become a better role model for your children. Our feature article also offers 20+21 inspiring ways to spread cheer!

We wish you and your family a peaceful, healthy, happy new year!

Cheers,

Annette

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# Play it product recalls **Safe**

## Government Recalls Bunk Beds, Baby Feeding Utensils and Bicycle Seats



Zinus is recalling about 26,000 **bunk beds** because the welds that secure the upper bunk can come apart, causing it to collapse. Of 13 reports of the bunk bed welds failing, three resulted in bumps and bruises after the consumer fell to the floor. The recall involves three models of Zinus' metal bunk beds (RPBB, NTBB, OPLBB). Zinus is contacting all purchasers directly. Affected units were sold online at amazon.com, walmart.com, wayfair.com, overstock.com, homedepot.com and zinus.com from December 2016 through January 2020 for between \$90 and \$240. Consumers should immediately stop using the recalled upper bunk and contact the firm for a free repair kit or a full refund.



Herobility is recalling about 890 **baby spoons and forks** because the plastic feeding utensils can break into small pieces and pose a choking hazard. This recall includes Eco Baby Spoons and Forks, Eco Feeding Spoons and Eco Placemat 4-Piece Feeding Sets. Affected units were sold online at herobility.com and at Buy Buy Baby, Dillard's, The Mama 'Hood, Kidsland, Traveling Tikes, Adolce Baby, Mum and Mini, Earth Baby, Global Infant, Li'l Baby Sprouts, Mariposa Hill, Macy's and Babylist stores nationwide from March 2019 through September 2020. Cost ranged from about \$9 for the spoon or fork to \$50 for the placemat set. Consumers should immediately contact Herobility for a full refund or a gift card for future use.



Burley is recalling about 780 **bicycle seats** because the reclining plate that holds the bicycle seat in place can detach, making the child seat unstable. This can cause the rider of the bicycle to lose control, posing a crash hazard. No cases of injury have been reported. This recall involves Dash X FM frame mount child bicycle seats with model number 924004. The recalled child seats have a serial number beginning in P924 and a lot number beginning with the letter D or E. Affected units were sold at various bicycle retailers and online at burley.com, rei.com and amazon.com from April 2020 through July 2020 for about \$190. Consumers should immediately contact Burley for a replacement Dash Bicycle Seat.

*The US Consumer Products Safety Commission works to protect the public from unreasonable risks of serious injury or death from more than 15,000 types of consumer products.*



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## FAMILY MATTERS

BETTY RICHARDSON

*Richardson, PhD, RN, CS, LPC, LMFT, is an Austin-based psychotherapist.*



# Resolving To Be Better Role Models

**Q** We love our kids (ages 5, 8 and 13) and want them to grow up to enjoy life and be successful as parents and marital partners. That said, I worry because my wife does not like me to be affectionate toward her around the children, and she is often critical of me in front of them. We don't do fun things as a family like I see some families doing. What effect, if any, do you think this will have on our kids?

**A** Your behavior sets your kids up for similar behavior in their future relationships. If you and your wife make no changes, don't be surprised to see your behaviors repeated by your children when they have adult relationships. It's common at the first of the year to make New Year's resolutions. I suggest that you and your wife resolve to become the best role models you can be for your kids. Take a hard look at the values you want for your family, identify where you fall short and resolve to change. Here are a few suggestions for changing your role model behaviors.

### Be Role Models As:

#### 1. Marital partners

Evidence that one's parents like each other is very reassuring to children. My

father kissed my mother every time he left the house. While classmates worried their parents were divorcing, I was certain mine wouldn't divorce. Children are tuned into tensions between parents. If they sense something wrong between their parents, it tends to increase their anxiety. When parents seem happy in their relationship, children tend to relax, have a sense of security and feel happy themselves.

#### 2. Parents of a family that supports one another in constructive ways

Criticism of a parent in front of the children (or in private) has no place in a good marital relationship. There are ways to encourage the behavior you want without being critical of behavior you don't like. For example, if a partner throws his clothes on the floor and you want them in a hamper, communicate your request for change in a respectful manner, and then use praise or express thanks every time clothes make it in the hamper. If this isn't successful, ask your partner what it would take to get the clothes in the hamper, and explain why it is important to you. Children need to see parents being kind to each other and working things out rather than resorting to criticism. Critical parents tend to raise kids who are critical of others.

#### 3. People who are kind to others

Children whose parents are empathetic and kind learn to practice this behavior instead of bullying.

#### 4. Problem solvers

Parents can demonstrate problem solving and teach their children the process. When children describe a problem, they can be encouraged to come up with solutions.

#### 5. Parents who support fun in families

As your children visit with friends, they will learn that some families have fun together, and they may wish that their family did too. Some families set aside one night as a family fun night and watch movies or play cards and games. These experiences give parents the opportunity to demonstrate that it's good to have fun. They also offer the chance to model how to graciously win and lose, another important life skill.

If you and your wife maintain your current behaviors, your children may turn out just fine. On the other hand, you can be more certain that your kids will be happy and successful if you put in the work to be better role models. The start of a new year is a great time to begin!



# AROUND

# Austin

GO TO [AUSTINFAMILY.COM](http://AUSTINFAMILY.COM) FOR WEEKLY UPDATES OF AROUND AUSTIN NEWS

## Construction Nearly Complete

The end of 2020 had teachers and administrative staff packing up and readying to move to the modernized Norman-Sims Elementary School. After unpacking their materials and decorating their new classrooms, teachers and faculty prepare to welcome students for the spring semester. The gym, library, large classrooms and Discovery Zone, a place where students can build, create and explore, open to students this January. Students, family and faculty voted on the new mascot for the school. The winning choice was the Trailblazers!

Norman-Sims Elementary School is proud to be ranked as #3 on the Texas School Guide's PaceSetter School list. PaceSetter Schools are Gold Ribbon eligible schools that have shown significant improvements from prior years and are on track to becoming Gold Ribbon schools in the future.



Modernization of Norman-Sims Elementary School is part of the Austin ISD 2017 Bond Program. Photo courtesy of Austin ISD.



A new campus will open at NYOS this year, doubling current enrollment.

## New Campus

NYOS (Not Your Ordinary School), a tuition-free, public charter school located in North Austin, has begun construction on a new campus facility, scheduled to open in the summer of 2021. The new campus will add 76,300 square feet of classroom and administrative space.

The new campus facility's expansion consists of a new elementary school building, a new middle school building, renovations of the current Lamar Campus facilities for high school, a practice field, a gym and performance space options for the performing arts.

With the completion of the new campus, NYOS will nearly double its student enrollment to 2,000 students. Class sizes will stay the same, with a median of 18 students per class. With added classrooms, NYOS will be able to fill additional seats for the 2021-2022 school year in kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and sixth grade.

NYOS Charter School offers a PreK-12 program that challenges each learner with rigorous academics, innovative strategies and expectations for civic engagement. Student learning is optimized through research-based professional development, small class sizes, a year-round calendar and a commitment to meeting each individual student's needs.

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Local grower Ian McKenna was named a finalist for Time magazine's first ever Kid of the Year award for his ongoing efforts to feed the hungry.

## Kid of the Year

Austin's own Ian McKenna was recently named one of the top five finalists for Time magazine's Kid of the Year award. A senior at LASA High School, McKenna has grown over 20,000 pounds of produce for those in need over the course of the past seven years. His project began in an effort to alleviate hunger among the quarter of his elementary school population that did not have enough to eat at home.

Over the years, the scope of his project grew from the confines of his backyard and school garden to incorporate five other area schools. Vegetables and produce from McKenna's Giving Garden continue to go to families in need as well as local food pantries.

McKenna also cooks meals on weekends to distribute to the hungry. During COVID-19, he began offering online cooking classes to teach people how to prepare dishes and to encourage families to eat their veggies.

## Celebrate MLK Day

Although this year's MLK Community Festival and March have been cancelled due to the pandemic, there are still several ways that you can honor the memory of Martin Luther King Jr.

### MLK Oratory Competition

The Austin Area Heritage Council, in collaboration with Google Fiber and Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity, will hold their virtual oratory competition on Thursday, Jan. 14, at 6:30 p.m. Fourth, fifth and sixth graders will present five-minute speeches to share their dreams and ideas for creating a stronger, more unified world.

### MLK Day of Service

On Monday, Jan. 18, join the United Way and Keep Austin Beautiful for the MLK Jr. Boulevard Clean Up. Volunteers are invited to enjoy a kick-off breakfast at 9 a.m. at United Way (2000 E. MLK Jr. Blvd.) before heading out with supplies for an area clean up.

For more details, see [mlkcelebration.com](http://mlkcelebration.com), or devise your own MLK Day service project to celebrate Dr. King's legacy.



Celebrate MLK Day on Monday, Jan. 18. Photo courtesy of Austin Area Heritage Council.



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## THE Learning curve

ALISON BOGLE

*Bogle is an Austin-based freelance writer and mom of three.*

# Peace by Piece: What LEGO and Puzzle Play Teach

There is something peaceful and contemplative about the start of a new year. The bustle of the holidays is past, the decorations come down, and the weather encourages coziness and hibernation. A new year stretches before you, full of possibility and hope. It is a time for slowing down, for relaxation and for connecting with loved ones over quiet activities.

If you are a parent of young children, that last sentence is probably about where you spit out your caffeinated beverage of choice! Young children and quiet activity go together about as well as oil and water. Still, there are benefits to unplugging our kids from electronics and introducing them to activities that encourage them to slow down and to focus. Two of the very best activities for teaching just that (and more) are puzzles and LEGO, or other similar building sets.

What's more, puzzle and building brick play present great opportunities to bond as a family and to model that there is value in playing with things that don't go fast, make noise or require batteries. Without realizing it, your kids will be

learning valuable skills that will help them in life, and you'll be bonding as a family through shared experience.

### Benefits to puzzle and brick play

#### 1. Concentration and focus

Puzzles and LEGO help your child to work on his focus and concentration as he searches for and fits puzzle pieces or follows building instructions. Even the most eager children learn the importance of slowing down to focus on the task at hand in order to accomplish the desired end result.

#### 2. Fine motor skills and dexterity

Picking up and manipulating puzzle pieces or building bricks is a great way for your child to improve her fine motor skills. Younger children, who might be using blockier puzzle pieces or the larger LEGO DUPLO blocks, are improving their dexterity as well as their finger and hand strength. For older builders, fine motor work is an essential component to handwriting improvement.

#### 3. Spatial awareness

Spatial awareness refers to the awareness of objects and one's body

position relative to those objects. It is a complex skill that children begin to develop from an early age and one that parents can promote with puzzle and LEGO play. Solving visual, piece-based puzzles allows your child to learn how different pieces need to be manipulated to create the larger image. Considering how building bricks fit together, and



**When you ... unplug,  
slow down, imagine  
and communicate  
... you are helping  
your child to develop  
lifelong skills."**



how they should be placed to create a desired outcome, also encourages the development of a child's spatial abilities. Numerous studies have shown that better spatial awareness correlates to stronger abilities in math, science, art and design. And, it's never too late to strengthen spatial awareness skills! Adults can improve their abilities through puzzle and LEGO play, as well.

#### 4. Communication

Parents, you're an important part of the play! As you create together, you'll be talking about what you're working on – sharing ideas about which structure to build, or which puzzle piece you're hunting for. That back and forth is a natural way to model and reinforce appropriate give and take in a conversation.

#### 5. Teamwork and sharing

Whether you're following building instructions, creating your own vision, or putting together a puzzle, you are teaching your child that teamwork is the best way for the two of you to accomplish your goal. You won't be successful if you can't work together on your strategy, or if one person ends up hogging all of the pieces. By playing together, you help your child strengthen her social skills and practice conflict resolution, so that play with her peers can be a positive experience.

#### 6. Perseverance and frustration tolerance

Even adults can reach a point when a puzzle makes them want to throw in the towel! By hanging in there together when the going gets tough, you are teaching your child perseverance. Over time, your child will build his tolerance for handling frustration, which translates to benefits in many areas of life. There is value, too, in modeling how to take breaks when things get frustrating or tiring, so that you and your child can see things through to the satisfying end.

#### 7. Creativity and imagination

There is no "right" way to play with building brick sets like LEGO. If your child loves to follow the step-by-step building instructions, great! If your child loves to dump everything out of the box and

free build, also great! Some of the most fun comes from dreaming up an idea, and then creating it in building brick form. The possibilities are endless when free building, and your child will practice the important skills of thinking outside of the box, brainstorming, trying new ideas and being creative.

Playing together as a family is one of the best ways to build strong relationships.

When you choose an activity that causes participants to unplug, slow down, imagine and communicate, not only are you creating fond memories, but you are helping your child to develop lifelong skills. So, the next time your child asks you to play with him, leave the game system behind, dump out the puzzle or building brick pieces – and get creating!



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# 41 Ways To Spread Cheer in the New Year

BY PAM MOLNAR

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21  
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41



If you have ever experienced a random act of kindness, you know the profound joy even the simplest act can produce. There's a surprise and level of connection that can shake you out of the rhythm of routine and leave a lasting impact. This year, encourage your family to spread that kindness to the people who cross your paths.

Here are 41 fun, friendly ideas to ring in the new year and help a fellow human. Consider these as you make your new year resolutions, or brainstorm your own family list as you set out to spread cheer this year!



## Simple Acts a Child Can Do

1. Smile at passersby, or wave to them from your house or car window.
2. Send a note of appreciation to a coach, teacher or neighbor.
3. Do a chore without being asked.
4. If you see something out of place, put it back where it goes.
5. Start the day on the right foot. Smile and say "good morning" to everyone you see.
6. Bring in a neighbor's garbage cans on a cold day.
7. Write handwritten letters to older family members. Show them that they are worth the time.
8. Hold the door open for the person behind you.
9. When you receive prize tickets from arcade games, give them to someone else so they can get a bigger prize.
10. Hand a refreshing bottle of water to the mail carrier, or take cookies to your trash collectors.
11. Leave a note with a kind word or message on someone's front door or car windshield.





### Make Someone's Day

1. Let someone ahead of you in line at the store.
2. Compliment someone on their hair, clothes, smile, skills or sense of style.
3. Offer your seat to someone who needs it more than you on the bus, on the train or in a waiting area.
4. Give up a great parking spot to the person behind you, and walk a little farther yourself.
5. Send friends silly cards or ecards to let them know you are thinking of them.
6. Give parents a break. Offer to babysit while they catch up on sleep or shopping.
7. If store or restaurant employees have been kind or helpful, be sure to tell their boss or write a positive review.
8. Share a word of encouragement with a parent or teacher who has his hands full.
9. If you have to run out to the store on a cold or rainy day, be sure to ask your neighbor if they need something.
10. Ask a friend about their day, then listen.

### Share the Wealth

1. Buy hot cocoa on a cold day for someone working outdoors.
2. Hand out \$5 gift cards to customers in line at your favorite coffee shop or restaurant.
3. Leave coins or boxes of detergent at the laundromat with a note that says, "For you."
4. Put together packets with toiletries and nonperishable food items or baked goods to hand to someone experiencing homelessness. Include a handmade card in the package.
5. Pay for the order of the person behind you in the drive-through window.
6. Purchase a "buy one, get one" item and share it with a friend.
7. Leave a generous tip for a small bill. We have all worked for tips at one time in our lives and know that feeling of surprise and gratitude for a big tip.
8. Buy lunch for the service people working at your house. Pizza goes a long way when there is more than one person to feed.
9. If you have an extra ticket, give it to someone waiting in line.
10. Make twice as much dinner as your family needs and take half to a neighbor – just because.



### Do Something Together as a Family

1. Leave small packages – mini-chocolates or small gifts of your own making – for someone to find on their desk or work area.
2. Tape coins to the gumball machines.
3. Send a surprise text, even a short string of emojis, to cheer up a friend who could use some love.
4. Collect old towels, blankets and newspapers for the animal shelter.
5. Leave a used book or good magazine at the dentist office, coffee shop, auto repair waiting room or a little library.
6. Think about someone who helped you out today in some way, big or small, and thank him with a positive review, a quick online post or a thank you note.
7. Give of yourself. Sign up to volunteer. Our area has several organizations that need family volunteers. Here are a few: Generation SERVE, Austin Allies, the Round Rock Area Serving Center, Keep Austin Beautiful and Austin Parks Foundation.
8. Pull a shy partygoer into a conversation by asking her about herself, or find a new friend at a park by inviting her to play.
9. Decorate your sidewalk with positive messages or happy pictures to cheer up everyone who passes by.
10. Collect things: cans and nonperishables for a food bank, trash from a creek cleanup, books to donate, or flowers and pretty leaves to share with a grandparent or neighbor.

Little acts can leave a big impact. It's the intent and connection that counts.

*Pam Molnar is a freelance writer and mother of three. She is blessed to be on both the giving and receiving end of random acts of kindness.*

be kind



**LIFELINES**

BRENDA SCHOOLFIELD

*Schoolfield is a freelance medical writer based in Austin.*

# Give Your Child a Boost in 2021 With a Daily Mindfulness Practice

Could your child use a boost with focus, learning, patience and self-regulation? Or maybe some help with stress or anxiety? Read on to find out why a mindfulness practice may be just what your child needs.

## **What is mindfulness?**

Mindfulness is being in the present moment. When thoughts pop into your mind, you don't engage with them. You remain totally present, without worrying about the future or dwelling on the past. You watch and listen attentively to the world unfolding around you, without judgment or analysis.

A mindfulness practice strengthens the mind in the same way that weightlifting strengthens muscles. If you spend time working out at the gym, your muscles get stronger. As a result, you are able to lift heavier objects. Stronger muscles make it easier to perform certain tasks or to play games that require strength.

Similarly, practicing mindfulness helps strengthen the part of the brain that

impacts how well we focus, pay attention and learn. Results can include improved self-regulation, judgment and patience.

## **How will a mindfulness practice help my child?**

Children who practice mindfulness have better academic skills, social skills and self-esteem. Research shows that mindfulness can reduce stress, anxiety and depression. Many schools have incorporated mindfulness programs into the classroom.

James Butler is the creator of a mindfulness program for children. Mr. Butler is a social and emotional (SEL) Mindfulness Specialist with Austin ISD. The program he developed has been used in over 200 classrooms in 44 different elementary schools in Austin ISD and Pflugerville Elementary. Mr. Butler says, "This program has helped empower students to be more aware of their feelings. The training helps improve interpersonal communication and conflict resolution skills. Teachers benefit by learning to be more present. They

become more aware of their feelings and their students' feelings."

## **What is involved in a mindfulness practice?**

Learning how to practice mindfulness involves the same principles as learning to play a sport. If your child bounces a basketball in the driveway a few times a year with no other practice, she probably won't become a competitive basketball player. She needs a coach and a regular practice routine. The same is true for a mindfulness practice. An effective practice is more than taking a deep breath, stopping to smell a flower or savoring a PB & J. Of course, those activities can be part of a mindfulness practice, but there is much, much more to learn.

## **How do we implement a mindfulness practice at home?**

Before you and your child begin a mindfulness practice, think about how you will implement it. Here are some recommendations:

- Locate a quiet place. It should be



away from the center of family activity and in a place where your practice won't be disturbed.

- Prepare a "Do Not Disturb—Mindfulness Meditation in Progress" sign or door hanger. Make it an art project for you and your child to complete together.
- Have a family meeting to share your plans for implementing a mindfulness practice. Explain how it will work and why it's important.
- Within the quiet meditation space, identify where you and your child will sit. You may sit on a comfortable chair or on a pillow on the floor. It is best to remain upright as opposed to lying down.
- Designate a specific time of day for the meditation practice. Some people use meditation as a restful transition to bedtime. Make it a daily practice that you and your child look forward to.
- Before you begin each meditation session, survey family members about immediate needs. You don't want to be interrupted by dad looking for his keys or your teenager's hunger pangs.
- After the meditation, spend a few minutes to reflect. Talk to your child about the experience. Ask questions about what she noticed or how she felt. Reflection is an important part of learning a new skill.

#### How do we get started?

An easy way to start is to download an app that teaches mindfulness for children. Some apps offer free content without a subscription. Popular apps for kids include Stop, Breathe & Think Kids; Breathe, Think, Do With Sesame; Go Noodle; Headspace; and Smiling Mind.

Smiling Mind is a good place to start because it is completely free. This evidenced-based app was originally developed to support a mindfulness curriculum in Australian schools. Programs are designed for specific age groups, so choose the one that fits your child. Their website at [smilingmind.com.au](http://smilingmind.com.au) offers an excellent, free downloadable guide for parents who want to learn more about mindfulness.

#### Mindfulness Resources for Students Provided by SEL/AISD

- "Today's Mindful Moment" videos are posted Monday through Friday on the Mindful AISD website at <https://sites.google.com/mindfulclassrooms.com/mindfulaisd/home>.
- The Mindful AISD website also includes science and research resources, videos to learn more about mindfulness and a book list.
- The SEL-at-Home website (<https://sites.google.com/austinisd.org/sel-at-home/>) has a section on Mindfulness Practices as well as other family and caregiver resources in social and emotional learning.



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[www.austinbilingualschool.com](http://www.austinbilingualschool.com)  
Ages 2-11

### CAMP DOUBLECREEK

Camp Doublecreek, an Austin Family Magazine Readers' Poll Favorite, has been an activity-based day camp for children aged 4-14 since 1971. Offering 30+ exciting outdoor activities that include: horseback riding, swimming, a giant water slide, climbing wall, ropes challenge

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[www.cordovanartschool.com](http://www.cordovanartschool.com)  
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512-288-8220  
13120 U.S. Hwy. 183 N., Austin  
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Ages 5-13

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Allandale - 512-419-7611  
Avery Ranch - 512-658-2996  
[www.dancediscovery.com](http://www.dancediscovery.com)  
Ages 3-18

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512-710-9654  
[www.austin.idealabkids.com](http://www.austin.idealabkids.com)  
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[www.austin.madscience.org](http://www.austin.madscience.org)  
[www.imagineartsacademy.com](http://www.imagineartsacademy.com)  
Ages 5-12



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- 2 two night sessions
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[kids.ymcagwc.org](http://kids.ymcagwc.org)

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www.mastergohring.com  
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www.riovistafarm.net  
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Ages 5-14

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[www.sasaustin.org](http://www.sasaustin.org)

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 Ages 2–5

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# NEW

## Gratitude Rocks!

Welcome to our **NEW** Austin Family Bucket List! Each month, we'll alternate between an activity to do at home and one that gets you out of the house for family fun. To kick things off, we're presenting a combo: collect rocks and then come home to a craft!



As we put 2020 behind us and embrace all the possibilities that a new year brings, let's take a moment to be appreciative of the small things we experience every day. Grateful for a fluffy dog, a cuddly cat or a happy hamster. Grateful for best friends, siblings, parents and teachers. We can find things to be grateful for everywhere. Gratitude Rocks are a fun way to recognize, celebrate, share and reflect on all we have to be thankful for.

### Materials Needed

- Rocks!
- Lightweight paper, such as newspaper or tissue paper
- Acrylic paint
- White glue or Modge Podge
- Low-gloss varnish or clear finish

### Directions

1. Explore your own backyard, a local park or creek and collect an assortment of rocks. Gather various sizes, shapes and colors. Avoid shiny or glossy rocks. Smooth ones work best.
2. Clean your rocks with soap and warm water. Allow to dry.
3. Paint with assorted colors of acrylic paint. It's not necessary to paint the entire rock. Feel free to leave some areas exposed. Let the paint fully dry.
4. Print words of gratitude on your paper. Tear out the words, leaving nice ragged edges.
5. Glue your gratitude paper to the rock. Let dry.
6. Finish by applying low-gloss varnish to each rock to seal it.

7. Repeat with more rocks!

Gratitude Rocks make beautiful paperweights, bright spots in your garden or special gifts for family and friends. We encourage you to share your colorful, meaningful creations with us on our Facebook page!



The Y is the leading nonprofit committed to strengthening community by connecting all people to their potential, purpose and each other. Working locally, we focus on empowering young people, improving health and well-being and inspiring action in and across communities.

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**PRINT READERS REMEMBER MORE.**

- **PRINT STIMULATES** EMOTIONS AND DESIRES
- **PRINT IS PREFERRED** BY THE MAJORITY (EVEN MILLENNIALS)
- PRINT READERS EXPERIENCE **MORE FOCUSED ATTENTION AND LESS DISTRACTION**, WHICH DRIVES SENSORY INVOLVEMENT CONTRIBUTING TO GREATER READER IMPACT, COMPREHENSION AND RECALL.

(MPA, Scott McDonald, Ph.D. Norriss Research)





## JUST FOR GRINS

CATE BERRY

*Berry is an Austin-based children's book author and mother of two. She also teaches writing workshops for young people at cateberry.com.*



### To the Peace Rock!

Like good Austin parents, we sent our kids to an enlightened preschool. And I mean this in the best possible way. The kids called the teachers by first names, they celebrated birthday fruit instead of cupcakes, and conflicts were “discussed” in lieu of discipline.

On Parent’s Night they paraded us to the Peace Rock, honorably displayed on the playground. Our son’s teacher explained The Peace Rose was used for talking on the Peace Rock, as disputes arose. Students could “share” their grievances only when holding the rose. Afterwards, as we slid behind our fuel-efficient economy car, we felt smug and thrilled for our son’s future.

I arrived late for pickup the next day to screams behind the wooden gates, stenciled with mushrooms and caterpillars. I hurdled the fence, imagining a mountain lion dismembering my defenseless child.

There stood my son atop the Peace Rock beating his friend senseless with the Peace

Rose. Expletives spewed, as the petals landed. I blushed, realizing the origin of his native tongue. Not to be selfish, he then “shared” the Peace Rose with his pal, who echoed the war cries of a 4-year-old exploring the freedom of the English language, while pounding my son. Then suddenly and without warning, the boys stopped. And the spitting began.

I thought to myself, peace cannot be forced. And after what felt like an eternity as I hid behind an eco-friendly shrub, the boys grew weary. Without any nudging, they threw down the Peace Rose of their own accord. And pulverized it with their sneakers.

This past year has felt like living with an outdated instrument of peace. Let’s make 2021 better. As we move forward, let’s call the Peace Rock what it is: a place to be ourselves. Our honest, fearless, gorgeous selves.

To the Peace Rock!

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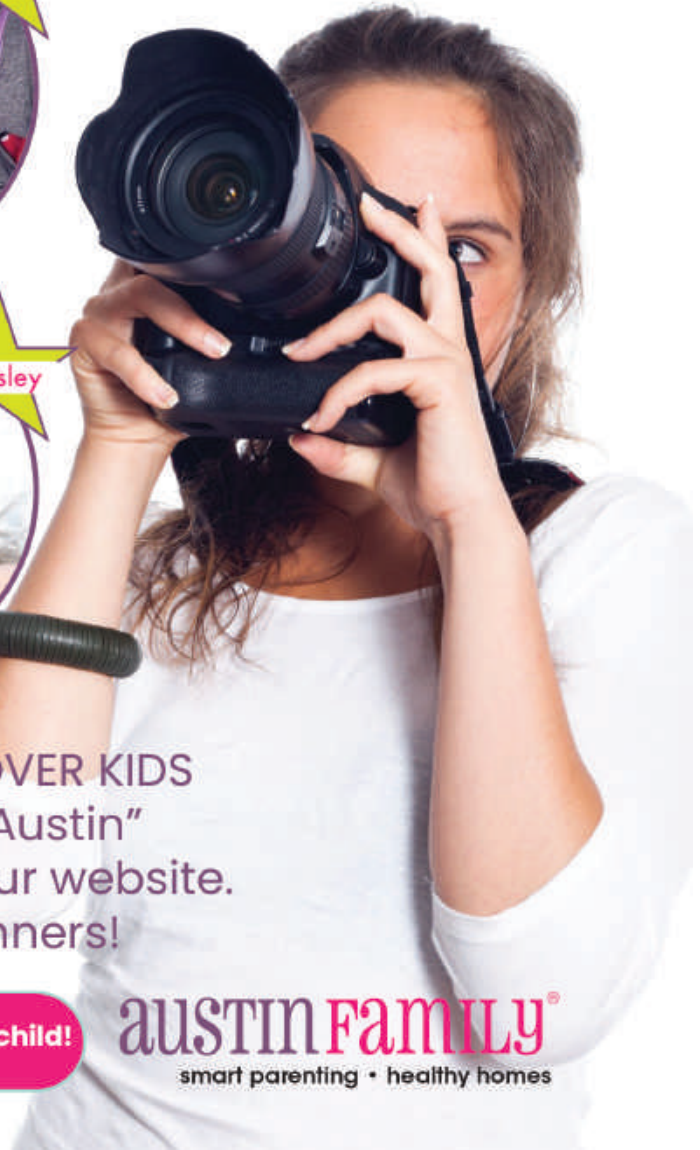
## Cover Kid

CONTEST WINNERS FOR 2021

Watch for snapshots of these COVER KIDS  
on our weekly FOX "Good Day Austin"  
morning segment, as well as on our website.  
Congratulations to all the winners!

Watch for the next Cover Kid Contest and enter your child!

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