



# Soulful Home

Finding the Sacred in  
Everyday Spaces

JOY  
April 2025

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# The Welcome Mat

## Exploring the Practice of Joy as a Family

We all have our journeys, and we know that people come into parenthood in different ways. For me, the journey was seeing the joy it brought others and, because of that, actively striving to be a parent. So, when I think about what it means to be a parent, joy is one of the first things that comes to mind. My life is full of simple and silly joys as well as deep and complex joys of parenting my children.

I am reminded daily, sometimes multiple times a day, that through and because of them, joy is not simply a fleeting feeling of happiness, but a spiritual practice, a way of being present, grateful, and open to the beauty of life. Raising my children has taught me to savor the deep and abiding joy available to us, even in life's busiest and most challenging moments.

And so, I see part of my parenting job is to ask the questions, such as, "How can we, as a family, *cultivate* joy together? What are we *doing* to bring joy into existence in our home? How can we *intentionally notice* joy, even when we are sad or struggling? And how can we *grow and share* joy with others? It's all about noticing that joy is not only a practice but something that depends on us.

So, with that said, this month, I pose the same types of questions to all of you: "How can you and your family cultivate joy? What are you doing to bring joy into existence in your homes and in the world? How can you teach your children the skill of noticing the blooming light of joy that happens even when clouds cover the sky?"

However you answer those questions, I hope you notice how much easier it is to find and grow joy when you are doing it with others. Yes, I've learned that there is great joy to be found in family, but I've also learned that family also enables us to spread joy farther than any of us can do alone.

May this power to share joy bless you and others this month!

Blessed be,

***April***



# At the Table

## Exploring Repair Through Discussions

*The At the Table section engages the theme through question-driven family discussions. The questions are designed to be used at a family gathering, most often dinner, but also during a quiet moment in the living room, before a board game night, or while driving in the car. This section strengthens the bonds within a family as members learn more about each other by asking and answering evocative questions.*

### How To Go About It

The most straightforward way to do this is to have parents and/or caregivers read off the questions they think will resonate the most with family members and have everyone take turns answering.

Another fun way to do this is to create [a family question jar](#). To make this easier, we've listed all the questions below **at the end of this packet** with dotted lines you can cut along to make "question strips." You can then pull out the question jar and have family members choose a question/strip a few times each week.

## Discussion Questions

1. Where do you most often feel joy in your body?
2. Who do you know who is always smiling?
3. Which food brings you the most joy?
4. Animals have many ways of expressing joy. How many ways can you name?
5. We feel joy when we help others. When did helping someone make you feel really joyful?
6. Is there ever a time that you don't want to feel joyful?
7. What's your favorite joke?
8. What would you say are the top three most joyful moments we've had as a family?
9. What is your favorite way to make someone else laugh?
10. Have your parents ever told you the story of the joyful day you came into the family?
11. What the most joyful thing about summer?
12. What's the most joyful thing about the school year?
13. If joy was a flavor of ice cream, what flavor would it be?
14. If joy was a candy bar, which candy bar would it be?
15. If you had to choose between feeling joyful, happy or silly, which would you choose?
16. Do you think joy is something different than happiness? Why or why not?
17. What is one of your favorite/best moments of bringing joy to someone else?
18. Are you mostly a creator of joy, receiver of joy, notice-er of joy or spreader of joy?
19. What is something that brings you joy that very few people know about?
20. What are some small things that bring you joy in your daily life?



# At Play

## Playing With Joy as a Family

*At Play suggests games, crafts, and activities to help families experience the theme through joy and fun.*

### This Month's Treasure Hunt - Searching for [Sensory Joy](#)

This month's treasure hunt is all about finding joy through your senses in the everyday things. You can do them in one day or spread them throughout the month. Remember, while this is a treasure hunt, joy isn't something we just find—it's something we create and share! May your journey be filled with laughter, kindness, and connection. So, with that in mind, we encourage you to document your journey with photos, drawings, or journal entries so that you can look back on this time and experience the joy all over again!

- Find a visual that makes you happy
- Find a scent that relaxes you
- Find a sound that makes you smile
- Find a texture that reminds you of someone you love
- Find a taste that reminds you of home

At the end of your treasure hunt, gather as a family and reflect:

- What was your favorite "joyful treasure" and why?
- How can we bring more joy into our daily lives?
- How can we help others experience more joy?

### Option A: Family Game Night

Soul Matters has heard from many sources that the following are some games that are sure to put a smile on everyone's face! So give them a try this month and see if you agree!

- [Pass the Potato](#) (ages 3+)
- [Pie Face](#) (ages 5+)
- (ages 6+)
- [Exploding Kittens](#) (ages 7+)
- [Watch Ya' Mouth - Family Edition](#) (ages 8+)

### Option B: Joyful Charades

Gather the family (and friend) for a fun game of Joyful Charades. Write down joyful actions (e.g., "jumping in a pile of leaves," "eating your favorite food," "playing with a puppy") and act them out while others guess.



### Option C: Family Dance Party

Gather the family (and friends), put on your most joyful outfit, grab a speaker and your favorite upbeat music, and have a dance-off. Each person must invent a silly move that everyone else has to copy.

### Option D: Painting Easter Eggs

Have fun together exploring the joy that comes from these different ways of dying Easter Eggs.

- [Baking Soda Paint Easter Eggs](#)
- [Naturally, Dye Easter Eggs](#)
- [Dye Eggs with Shaving Cream](#)
- [Making Pysanky\(ish\) Eggs With Kids](#)
- [Pressed Flower Easter Eggs](#)

### Option E: Finding Joy in Nature as a Family...

#### 1: Sunrise Breakfast

Pack a breakfast picnic and find a quiet place to eat and watch the sunrise. Listen to the sounds of nature waking up around you. Take turns naming and identifying sounds. As the sun rises, imagine painting with the colors for all to enjoy, or even better, bring paints or coloring supplies with you and paint your own sunrise pictures.

#### 2: Summer Storm Watch

Cozy up as a family and watch a summer storm from the living room or on the porch (if it is safe, of course). It seems as though people have one of two reactions to storms – either fear or fascination. To add more excitement or drama, listen to some suspenseful classical music as you watch the “light show.”

#### 3: Stargazing

On a clear night, go outside, lie on a blanket, and look at the stars. This experience is intensified if you can view the stars in a rural versus urban setting. The darker your surroundings, the brighter the stars appear. A quieter setting also adds to the awe and magnificence of a starry night. Packing a bedtime snack and a story is a fun way to round out your family’s evening.



# At the Bedside and in the Book Nook

*At The Bedside & In the Nook suggests books that help families engage the monthly themes with their imagination. This story-centered section honors the unique way stories enrich our sense of what's possible, expand our empathy, and build our identities.*

## Joy Takes Root

**by Gwendolyn Wallace (suggested for kids 4-8)**

"In her grandmother's garden, a young Black girl learns about mindfulness and herbal medicine in this soothing intergenerational story about our connection to nature.

It's Joy's first summer in her grandmother's South Carolina garden—a rite of passage. In the midst of okra, spinach, and strawberries, Grammy teaches Joy that plants are friends with many uses. Herbs, for example, can be turned into medicine. There, in Grammy's abundant backyard, Joy learns to listen for the heartbeat of the earth and connect it to her own as she takes deep breaths and puts her intentions into the soil. By the story's end, she learns to grow seeds in her own garden, honoring all that her grandmother taught her. With sensory-rich illustrations from award-winning illustrator Ashleigh Corrin, Joy Takes Root is a blissful reminder of all that might bloom."

**Invitation to Connect:** Parents, ask your children where they find joy in nature.

## The Joy Troll

**by Laetitia Nneke (suggested for kids 3-8)**

This is a fantastic book about the magic of friendship. "For love, laughter, and joy was banned, A message to spread all over the land!" Dive into an adventure with the Joy Troll, who is on a mission full of tricks, twists, and turns to steal JOY from the happiest children in the land, but little does he know... there is a wise woodpecker who has other plans!

**Invitation to Connect:** Parents use this as an opportunity to talk about how empathy, kindness, and joy are all important parts of friendships, and how sometimes others may try to steal our joy, but they can only succeed if we let them.

## A Kids Book About Joy

**by Shivantika Jain Kothari (suggested for kids 5-9)**

"Joy is a funny emotion. Sometimes, we think it's silly or that it isn't important enough for big kids or grownups. But guess what? Joy is a deeply meaningful emotion, which connects us to the larger world and guides us in positive ways. And it's for all of us at any point in our lives." - Amazon

**Invitation to Connect:** Parents use this as an opportunity to talk about how to use joy to connect with others.

## Black Boy Joy: 17 Stories Celebrating Black Boyhood

**by Kwame Mbalia (suggested for kids 8-11)**

Celebrate the joys of Black boyhood with this vibrant collection of stories, comics, and poems about the power of joy and the wonders of Black boyhood from seventeen bestselling, critically acclaimed Black male and non-binary authors.

"Black boy joy is...

Picking out a fresh first-day-of-school outfit.

Saving the universe in an epic intergalactic race.

Finding your voice—and your rhymes—during tough times.

Flying on your skateboard like nobody's watching."





# In Front of the Screen

## Watching Meaningful Movies Together

*In Front of the Screen offers families ways to connect with the monthly theme and each other through movies and TV shows.*

### **Bluey - Baby Race" (Season 2, Episode 50). (G)**

In this episode, Chili (Bluey's mom) shares a story about when Bluey was a baby and how she compared her progress to other kids. At first, she feels discouraged, but she eventually realizes that every child develops at their own pace—and that joy comes from embracing the journey rather than rushing to meet expectations.

**Invitation to Connect:** *After watching, talk about the joys everyone is experiencing now in whatever part of their journey.*

### **Up (G)**

Snuggle up as a family and watch this touching story about adventure, friendship, and finding joy even after loss.

**Invitation to Connect:** *Parents, here's your chance to share stories about how it is ok to still feel joy and happiness after a loss or something sad has happened.*

### **Sing (PG)**

A feel-good movie about chasing dreams and finding joy in music.

**Invitation to Connect:** *Parents, use this movie as an opportunity to talk to your kids about the dreams you have chased in your life and the joy they have brought you, and then ask your child(ren) what dreams they have that they might want to chase and how and why those will add joy to their lives.*

### **Mary Poppins (1964 or 2018) (PG)**

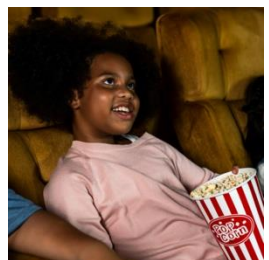
Dive into a magical adventures of this classic that reminds us of the joy in imagination and play.

**Invitation to Connect:** *Parents, use this movie as an opportunity to talk to your kids about why imagination and play are so important even as they get older.*

### **The Greatest Showman (PG 10+)**

A great fictional movie for older kids that focuses on a celebration of dreams, joy, and self-acceptance.

**Invitation to Connect:** *Parents, use this movie as an opportunity to talk with your kids about fantasy and drama and how stories are changed for movies. This is a fantastic and fun movie that also totally romanticizes Barnum, who was, in reality, not a super great guy who was focused on inclusion. Use this as an opportunity to have some conversation on why the story is told the way it is and how they feel about it.*





# In the Toolbox

## Strategies to Help Our Kids Navigate the Complicated Stuff

*In the Toolbox offers parents resources to better understand the well-established and newly emerging challenges of being a child today. It's all about equipping parents to be better guides and companions for their kids.*

### Resource One:

#### The Unexpected Joy Of Sharing Your Kid's Hobbies

<https://www.romper.com/parenting/hobbies-activities-kids-mom>

"Following where their interests go has been one of the best, unexpected, and life-expanding parts of parenting..."

### Resource Two:

#### The Joy Of The Bedtime Spill

<https://www.romper.com/parenting/bedtime-spill-why-kids-open-up-at-night>

"The big light is off, and the ceiling fan is tilting around on low. The warm-hued nightlight on the dresser casts a calming glow around the room. You've brushed teeth, read a book, maybe done your special handshake, or whatever it is that constitutes the nighttime routine in your house. And in those precious, hushed moments right before you kiss your child on the forehead and pull the blanket up to their chin, it happens: the bedtime spill... the joyful moments when your child lets you into their innermost thoughts.

### Resource Three:

#### How to Help Your Kids Be Funny Without Being Mean

<https://coffeeandcarpool.com/help-your-kids-be-funny-without-being-mean/>

When we think of joy, we often immediately think of things that are funny and make us laugh. And yes, we want our kids to laugh, we want them to enjoy life and giggle at silly things. But there is a fine line between funny and mean, and many kids don't automatically know the difference. For many, this nuanced line is a social skill that needs to be taught.

### Resource Four:

#### What's a UU family to do on Easter?

Michelle Richards, UU World Magazine

<https://www.uuworld.org/articles/uu-family-easter>

Helping parents reflect on what to do and if/how they should celebrate Easter. "Some Unitarian Universalist parents are torn over the celebration of Easter. While they may have no problem celebrating Christmas—and the birth of Jesus—they balk at a holiday that commemorates the resurrection. They wonder if they should celebrate a holiday contradictory to their theology."



# On the Porch

## Connecting and Sharing Stories with [Your Village](#)

*On the Porch uses thoughtful questions to open space for you and your parenting partners or parent/caregiver friends to connect more deeply with each other and think more deeply about how the monthly theme has shown up in your life and can show up in a more intentional way.*

### How to Go About It

Bring these questions with you when the time comes to hang out with your co-parent or parenting/caregiver buddy. Treat the questions less as a quiz and more like doorways inviting you into the world of mutual storytelling and memory. Go through them all or pick a few that call to you most.

### Questions

1. What were you first taught about “deserving joy”?
2. Did you grow up in a “happy family”?
3. What is your first memory of feeling joy?
4. What was your definition of joy as a child? How about as a teenager? And young adult?
5. What simple joy rescues over and over again?
6. As your child grows older, what new joy are you experiencing in your parenting and guiding?
7. What is one of your favorite/best moments of bringing joy to someone else?
8. Has joy ever been an act of resistance for you?
9. What would you tell your child if they said that their friends always wanted them to “cheer up” but sometimes they just don’t feel “cheery”?
10. Are there any habits or routines we can start to bring more joy into our home
11. What do you do when you feel discouraged or negative to bring your focus back to joy?
12. Who in our lives might need more joy right now, and how can we help?
13. When was the last time you told your partner or closest friend that they bring you delight?



# Alongside the Chalice

*Family spiritual practices and rituals are crucial for kids, youth, and adults. While lighting a chalice at home is a beautiful family practice, it can often be the only explicit UU identity practice we bring into our homes. So our Alongside the Chalice section offers a different UU practice, observance, or ritual for families to try out each month, with the hope that a few stick and become woven into the repeated and treasured rhythms of family life.*

## Sabbath/Family Rest Day/Sunday Supper

Set aside a screen-free day or evening for simple joys like cooking together, reading a book out loud as a family, doing a giant puzzle, or going on a hike.

## Morning Blessing or Mantra

Start the day with a positive affirmation like, *"Today is a gift, and we will find joy in it."*

## Mindful Breathing & Laughter Yoga

Laughing yoga is a popular movement and breathing exercise that aims to cultivate joy, bring out your inner child, and help you let go of daily life stressors. Take a few deep breaths together and intentionally laugh—it's contagious and uplifting!

- [Laughing Yoga: What Is It and Does It Work?](#)
- [5 Minute Laughter Yoga Workout](#)

Take a break to boost your mood and energy with a couple of fun and easy Laughter Yoga exercises followed by a few minutes of relaxation. Perfect for a quick pick-me-up!



# The Extra Mile

*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. A bit more effort, but well worth it!*

## Plan a Joyful Day Trip

A day trip can be a beautiful way to lift up joy as a spiritual practice, celebrating gratitude, connection, and presence together. Here's a step-by-step guide to creating a meaningful and joy-filled adventure:

### Step 1: Set an Intention for Joy

Begin by reflecting as a family:

- What brings each of us joy? (Consider choosing a simple guiding theme like Wonder/Exploring, Gratitude, Learning, Nature, Play, etc.)
- How can we experience joy together?
- How can we share joy with others on this trip?

### Step 2: Choose a Joy-Inspiring Destination

Pick a place that encourages connection, appreciation, and fun! Some ideas:

- Nature Adventure – A park, nature preserve, or beach for exploration and awe.
- Creative Excursion – A museum, street art walk, or DIY art-making experience.
- Service & Joy – Volunteer at an animal shelter, community garden, or food pantry.
- Play & Laughter – A fun spot like a botanical garden, science center, or family-friendly festival.

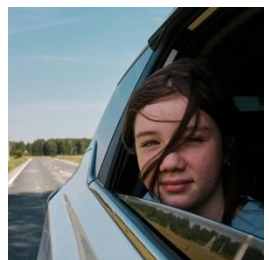
### Step 3: Infuse Joyful Rituals Throughout the Day

- Morning Centering – Before heading out, take a deep breath together, light a chalice (or use a symbolic gesture), and share what each person hopes to experience.
- Joyful Playlist – Create a mix of uplifting songs to play during the drive.
- Mindful Joy Scavenger Hunt – Challenge each person to find 5 things that spark joy and share why they noticed them.
- Capture Gratitude – Take pictures or draw what brings you joy.
- Kindness Moment – Leave a kind note, pick up litter, or find a small way to spread joy.

### Step 4: Closing Reflection & Celebration

Before heading home, pause to reflect:

- What was the most joyful moment of the day?
- How did we create joy, not just experience it?
- How can we carry this spirit of joy into everyday life?
- Consider closing with a simple family blessing: "May we continue to find joy in each other, in the world, and in the moments that make life meaningful."



# Blessing of Joy

Dear fellow magic moment makers,  
belly laugh inducers,  
And ear-to-ear smile spreaders,

May joy find you in the everyday moments—  
In the laughter of your children,  
In the warmth of your home,  
And in the simple, sacred rhythms of family life.

May you practice joy as a lesson and a gift—  
Not just in times of celebration,  
But in the quiet, ordinary days,  
In the questions asked, the stories shared,  
And the love that binds you together.

May you remember to give yourselves permission  
to feel joy that is entirely your own,  
On your own timeline  
Of your desire  
Without worrying about what others will say  
Without feeling guilty.

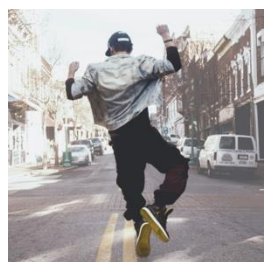
May your home be a place where joy is nurtured—  
Through kindness and play,  
Through gratitude and wonder,  
Through service and generosity.

May your children learn from you the deep truth of joy—  
That it is not just something you feel,  
But a way of seeing, a way of being,  
And a light that grows when shared.

As you travel this journey together,  
May joy be your guide, your teacher, and your blessing.

May it be so.

~ ***April Rosario***



## Question Jar Cut-Outs

*Notice that there are a few blank strips at the bottom of the list.*

*We invite you to write your own questions on those strips.*

*We also remind you that questions that evoke stories are often the most impactful.*

**Where do you most often feel joy in your body?**

**Who do you know who is always smiling?**

**Which food brings you the most joy?**

**Animals have many ways of expressing joy.**

**How many ways can you name?**

**We feel joy when we help others.**

**When did helping someone make you feel really joyful?**

**Is there ever a time that you don't want to feel joyful?**

**What's your favorite joke?**

**What would you say are the top three most joyful moments  
we've had as a family?**

**What is your favorite way to make someone else laugh?**

**Have your parents ever told you the story  
of the joyful day you came into the family?**

**What the most joyful thing about summer?**

**What's the most joyful thing about the school year?**

**If joy was a flavor of ice cream, what flavor would it be?**

**If joy was a candy bar, which candy bar would it be?**

**If you had to choose between feeling joyful, happy or silly,  
which would you choose?**

**Do you think joy is something different than happiness?  
Why or why not?**

**What is one of your favorite/best moments of  
bringing joy to someone else?**

**Are you mostly a creator of joy, receiver of joy,  
notice-er of joy or spreader of joy?**

**What is something that brings you joy that  
very few people know about?**

**What are some small things that bring you joy in your daily life?**



# More Inspiration For You and Your Family!

Parents can Join our Facebook and Instagram pages for  
daily Inspiration on our themes:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/soulmatterssharingcircle/?ref=settings>

Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/soul\\_matters\\_circle/](https://www.instagram.com/soul_matters_circle/)

Parents and youth will want to check out  
our [Spotify](#) & [YouTube](#) music playlists on the monthly themes.

## Credits

Soulful Home packets are prepared by

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## And Thanks to Our Widening the Circle Team

We thank [The Widening The Circle Team](#) for their insight and help with this packet. Their support and research run throughout this packet, from the stories to the activities. Their help in putting inclusion and love at the center of our packets is a vital part of helping families also center love in their faithful everyday moments.

You are free to use any of this material verbatim in worship, newsletters  
or similar contexts, with attribute to April Rosario.



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