

Emergency Family Dinner

A few weeks ago my 20 year old daughter was going through my recipe file cards and came across the "recipe" below.

Emergency Family Dinner

Take 1 messy house; throw in 3 cranky children and a strained mother. Allow to simmer for a few hours until boiling. With a frazzled father put in a preheated car for a short time and decant at (*fill in the name of your local fast food place here*). Fill and allow to cool off.

Like every family we had our share of days when nothing went quite right and everyone was irritating everyone else simply by existing. My daughter and I had an interesting talk that afternoon about the things we did as a family to change the atmosphere when we were having "one of those days".

I remember putting on loud music and getting everyone to dance until we were sweaty and laughing again. I remember instituting mid-afternoon bath time with soap crayons for the kids and letting them stay in the tub until their fingers were like raisins while I sat beside the tub and nursed the littlest one or read a magazine. In the summer, when they were little, a couple of buckets of water and some big paint brushes kept everyone busy, and separated, as they repainted the whole backyard and any part of the house they could reach. We also had a few indoor snowball fights with rolled up socks!

Amanda Whiting, a La Leche Canada Leader in Edmonton, shared a couple of ideas her family uses on "those days". She told me "we have a "do-over" – if it is a brutal day we all put our heads down and then "wake-up" again saying "good-morning" and start our day over. Her family also has "I love you" fights where they all yell that they love each other until they are all laughing again.

The recipe card is in my hand writing but there is no date or other clues on it to say what was going on that day. I know it was from some time before my daughter was born because she is the number four child. Our chat revealed that she doesn't remember the specifics of any of "those days" and neither do I. When you are in the middle of one it can seem like it will be burned in your memory forever. Thankfully it seems that if you can find a way to turn the tide and get everyone moving, laughing and fed those bad days don't hang around in yours or your children's memory banks.

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