



Designer Activities for an Enriched Life Connecting With Others

- 1. Visiting with family and friends.** Taking time to connect with others—forming close and even casual friendships provides valuable support systems in your life and the lives of those you connect with. Learning the art of visiting is easier than it may seem. Showing an interest in others and giving of yourself to them establish social ties that add savor and happiness to life.
- 2. Family sharing time.** Families that spend positive time together, such as sharing meals, are on a better footing for growth and happiness. Taking time together each day to share experiences, praying with and for one another, and reading inspirational books and stories can help families grown spiritually, socially, and emotionally. There are hundreds of daily devotional readings that are great for personal use or family sharing. They help equip each member with the necessary tools to meet the challenges each day brings.
- 3. Attending church, community programs.** Community calendars are full of church and community-sponsored events that are fun, educational, and inspiring. Programs that are free or inexpensive include healthful-living programs and seminars on money management, family life, and interior decorating. There are exercise classes, Bible study groups, reading rooms, library programs, and almost endless musical and instructive events geared to meet a variety of interests. Even health-food stores and hospitals often have interesting workshops on nutrition, skin care, and cooking. Check with your local library, Chamber of Congress, or even radio station to get a calendar of upcoming events. Local parks, recreation areas, and zoos offer outdoor education programs for children and adults. Programs include hiking, horseshoes, volleyball, canoeing, cross-country skiing, and nature walks. You will learn new things, make new friends, and infuse your life with variety, fun, and culture.
- 4. Playing, having fun.** It is great just to play and have fun. Playing hide-and-seek with your child; playing kickball with the neighbors after work some

evening; having a water fight with your spouse the next time you wash the car—there are many ways to have fun in a wholesome way that provide a novel change of pace. Some people enjoy throwing a neighborhood party in the backyard. Others prefer popping popcorn and swapping stories with a few friends on the front porch. Whether it's building a bonfire with friends and singing songs or playing hula hoop with your children—what have you done lately that is just plain fun? Everyone has a fun side that needs to show every now and then. Remember, real fun is refreshing, not rash; healthful, not harmful. Make a list of fun things you would like to do—and recruit some friends to join you!

- 5. Enjoying your pets.** Pets are great companions. Even your fish can be a friend. Watching fish whirl in a fish tank has a soothing effect on the entire system, relaxing the mind and lowering blood pressure. Interacting with pets can draw out the sweetest sentiments, bring healing to hurting people, and create an atmosphere of mutual care and nurture that aids in human relationships. Whether it's a gerbil or a gelding, the care and management of pets build responsibility, consistency, structure, and social interaction into your life. Pets are also great company. It's not practical or possible for everyone to have a pet, but petting zoos and nature centers provide a great opportunity to enjoy some of God's coziest companions—and provide interactive fun.

Learn Something New

- 1. Individual study.** Spiritual health is at the center of a freedom-filled life. Taking time for personal reflection, prayer, and Bible study is a powerful agent for change, inspiration, instruction for living, and connection with divine power. There are many valuable Bible-study aids and inspirational books that deal with topics of interest to meet individual needs.
- 2. Enjoy music.** Listen to inspiring music. Music has a powerful effect on mood, memory, and the emotions, all of which ultimately affect behavior.
- 3. Learn to play a musical instrument.** Learning to play a musical instrument can be a great way to have fun during downtime. It also connects you with others in a positive social context at musical events. It can provide entertainment and inspiration during family gatherings, especially if more than one family member plays an instrument.
- 4. Reading.** Taking time to read challenges the intellect, distracts the attention from the mundane, and strengthens brain circuits involved with learning,

reasoning, and analysis. Choosing educational, inspirational, and mentally challenging reading material will affect the mental landscape in a positive way. There are biographies and autobiographies of great heroes and missionaries that are thrilling and inspiring reading. There are science and other educational magazines that are interesting, entertaining, and challenging. This type of reading will leave you refreshed, cheerful, and strengthened rather than dull, depressed, and agitated.

5. Help with homework. Helping your child with homework can open up a world of research and knowledge for you and your child, while building friendship at the same time. It also provides you with an opportunity to help your child learn how to tackle frustrating problems that require focus and perseverance. Best of all, when the homework is done you will have time to play ball or go for a bike ride together to celebrate.

Enjoy Leisure Activities

- 1. Crafts, hobbies.** Crafts and hobbies are available for every age, and range from short and simple to elaborate and involved. The great thing about these arts is that they can be taken up at any age, whether it's stained glass, pottery, soap carving, or stamp collecting.
- 2. Quilting, clock-building, painting, and Lego robotics** are just a few of the hundreds of hands-on projects that can fill the hours with fun and the mind with mental stimulation. Another benefit is you will likely connect with other people of like interest and form lasting friendships and social ties. Making something to share with others is a great way to enrich your own life and infuse the lives of others with joy and happiness.
- 3. Home projects.** Getting involved with home projects can be a great way to save money, learn new skills, and experience the satisfaction of accomplishing a challenging task—whether it is learning to lay tile on your countertop, making curtains for the den, sponge painting the baby's room, or replacing worn wallpaper. Enjoy activities that improve your home and your mind. You are able to solve problems, gain skills that enable you to help others, learn patience when things go wrong, and have fun working on a project with other family members.
- 4. Cooking, baking.** Learning how to cook simple, healthful food is not only fun but essential for a healthy mind and body. Going one step further, it can be a great source of pleasure to learn how to bake whole grain specialty breads and

healthful cookies to enjoy or share. Cooking can be an exciting adventure, money-saving, and delicious. Get the family or invite friends in the kitchen and enjoy cooking together. It will open up a way for you to share good food as well as good company. You can create special occasions to bring joy into your own life and the lives of those around you. Many people enjoy drying their own fruits or canning fruits and vegetables.

5. Gardening. Even the dullest yard can be transformed with inexpensive, hardy flowers such as mums or marigolds. Planting a vegetable garden, berry bushes, and fruit trees not only provides a source of beauty but also of good nutrition. Many apartment complexes have patios that will accommodate growing boxes that can produce succulent tomatoes, peppers, and lettuce. Learning how to care for the soil and plants is a mental culture that improves your mood as well as your yard. The exercise helps burn excess calories, regulate hunger, and elevate mood. It is a great feeling to come home from a long day at work and spend a little time releasing the tension of the day by pulling those pesky weeds!

Enjoy the Outdoors

1. Sightseeing. There are many free or inexpensive historic sites, museums, and parks that provide scientific, cultural, and educational information. Parks often have trails or self-guided tours that help you identify local trees, plants, flowers, birds, or animals. Such excursions provide refreshment, distraction from the tensions of the week, and an affordable “mini-vacation” when that trip to the Bahamas is out of reach.

2. Exercising. Everyone needs daily exercise, and for most people at least one hour daily is beneficial. Exercise can be indoors or outdoors, mild or grueling. The type of exercise you choose should be the type you like—something you will stick with. Some people love to ride bikes; others prefer golfing, walking, or swimming. There are those who love to meet friends at the gym for racquetball or a full workout under the watchful eye of a trainer. Whatever the form, daily exercise is essential, not optional, for maximum mental and physical health. It reduces depression, tones the mind as well as the muscles, and provides fun, fellowship, and tension release. You can take lessons with some activities such as golf, skiing, or tennis. There are bike clubs, walking clubs, and exercise groups that meet regularly. These are great ways to make new friends, have fun, and feel great, too!

Relax and Enjoy

- 1. Doing nothing for a change!** In our fast, frenzied society, it's hard for us to think of doing *nothing* as an acceptable use of time. Doing nothing by melting into a recliner in front of the television has a vastly different effect on the mind than doing nothing by relaxing in a lawn chair to enjoy the sky lighting up with a blazing sunset. Television noise shuts down the brain's ability for reflection and meditation. But enjoying the calmness of a beautiful sunset, the sounds of nature, the rhythmic lash of waves on the seashore, a quiet picnic, are relaxing moments that open the senses and promote thoughtful reflection. Psychiatrist Richard Winters has noted that if we don't substitute true leisure for our hectic amusements, we will destroy our culture—and ourselves.*
- 2. Getting “off-line”** to reflect on our day—our experiences—and our life is a positive way to gather strength and energy for tomorrow's challenges. There is a daily round of demands that are commonplace, confusing, and clamor for our attention. But above that din of noise, in the quiet place of rest, God speaks His messages of love to His children. But He needs our attentive ear—and He needs us to be quiet.

Connect with God

- 1. Bible Study.** God's Word, the Bible, provides instruction for living and increases intellectual function. It develops insight and understanding for the big picture in life as well as the details. In the same way that we can't survive physically by an occasional meal, we can't grow spiritually by neglecting time with God. Spending daily time in God's Word will transform your life and strengthen you for the challenges you will meet each day. Inspiration, wisdom, and insight for living are free to all who study God's Word.
- 2. Meditation and prayer.** Meditation and prayer have measurable, positive effects on the brain. Meditating on the promises in God's Word increases faith, trust, and positive attitude. Prayer is a two-way conversation with God. Bible study reveals God's purpose and plan for humanity. Prayer provides the power to fulfill that plan. Through prayer, God cleanses us from destructive habits, helps us make positive choices, and gives us the perseverance to learn new thoughts and habits.

*Winters R. *Still Bored in a Culture of Entertainment*. (Downer's Grove, IL; Inter Varsity Press, 2002).