

Capitalize on Winter Fun— Create Family Bonding Experiences



by Caron MacLane

With winter the days shorten, cold comes and snow falls. Winter can be a fun time of year! What do you do for fun? Playing with gravity slipping and sliding down most any hill bring joy and delight. You can do that skiing. Take your whole family. You may think about being warm and cozy in the winter. Warm and cozy may be out on the ski slopes where you warm up from the inside out with physical activity or it may be inside with a steaming cup of spiced cider or hot chocolate further warming your hands and belly.

Skiing is even more fun with all ages of your family members. Here are some ideas to make your time on the slopes successful. Check it out for yourself.

Pace your family's energy. All ages can have fun on the ski slopes. Have the more seasoned family skiers guide and keep activities safe by staying on slopes everyone can handle. Allow the experienced skiers in your family to pace the group, too. Without pacing, younger skiers often go all out and then run out of steam early. In addition, let those who have been skiing longer have more mountain savvy pay attention to the overall safety of the group. If the veteran skiers are familiar with the layout of the land, have them guide according to abilities of the group and add variety in choosing different terrain.

Plan your family's day. Younger children may spend more time on bunny slopes depending on their ages and stages. If you have more than one adult in your group, you can trade off with bunny slope time to add more variation to your day. Your patience can wear when you feel you are being stuck doing bunny slope duty. Remember you go to the slopes to have fun! A bit of strategy on individual needs and

abilities, such as dividing up bunny slope duty among people, before reaching the snow can pay off for all involved.

Make time for adventure. When children's skill levels are better than the bunny slopes, they move to the next level of slope. These children like to lead exploration and even find fun, whether it is going someplace new, going off the edge of the run just a bit, turning off at a new route, or checking out a trail in the woods. Children of this age and ability like challenges, too, like skiing untracked, loose snow, or leading your group.

Enjoy nature. While you are at the ski area, remember to take time to enjoy being there. Take in the tranquility of snow and peacefulness in nature. Share with all ages the beauty you see and what speaks to you. Look at nature through younger people's eyes, too—what analogies do they draw upon from the experiences they have? Sunlight glistens on snow, making it sparkle like diamonds. Clouds look especially white and puffy like marshmallows, taking on their own shapes. The mountains majestically overlook the area like giant blocks carefully stacked.

Being in nature provides time to slow down and detach from technology. Take this time to recharge your own batteries and fill yourself with the freshness of outdoors. Nature offers calm. A different environment gives a change of pace to allow you to return to your routines with more vigor.

If you are looking for a way take advantage of winter and make connections, one place to go is to the snow, where you play as a family. Create your day on a ski slope followed by ski tales around a crackling fire with a hot beverage. Start a family tradition. Connect with your family and

connect with nature. Capitalize on winter fun by creating family bonding experiences.

Check out your skiing options. There are local areas that provide a fun family outing for you. Depending on where you live in Huckleberry Country, go to Loup Loup, 49 Degrees North, Mt. Spokane, Blue Wood or Mission Ridge, all within a couple of hours. For a weekend or longer trip, head to Montana for Whitefish or Big Sky. The deals are in Canada where your dollar is worth a third again as much as the Canadian dollar. This extra bonus makes skiing up north more attractive than it has been for more than 10 years. Big White caters to family fun and Whistler-Blackcomb is an all time favorite of skiers throughout the world.

Take advantage of the snow this season. Since there has been early snow this year after a bleak season for many areas last year, there are some special deals from those resorts vying for your participation. Check an area you would like to visit and see what they have to offer. The holidays are a popular time in the resorts. However, there is a lull during the first part of January, especially midweek.

Caron MacLane, a level three certified ski instructor, has fun teaching all ages at Crystal Mountain. The youngest child she has taught to turn a ski is 18 months, the oldest just turned a senior citizen. A three-year old she taught was racing and winning when he was six. Her happy clients include parents who say their children ski much better with Caron than those same children ski with their parents. In addition to teaching skiing, Caron is a personal coach. She integrates coaching on the slopes for people to learn life lessons on the snow. Watch for her upcoming book, How to Teach Your 3-Year-Old to Ski: A Guide to Low-Stress Family Fun on the Slopes. You can find out more at www.CaronCircleCC.com.



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