



# 5 Ways to Make a Forever Memory

HERE'S HOW TO CREATE MOMENTS SO PRECIOUS THEY'LL LIVE LARGE IN YOUR HEAD—AND YOUR HEART—FOR A LIFETIME.

By Sharlene Breakey

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## Make it tactile.

I'm 63 and have a young daughter, Phoebe, which has made me conscious of not being around forever. When she was born, I decided to build Phoebe a 10-foot, pale blue sailboat. Teaching her to sail will allow me to pass on my love of the sea and generate and help preserve memories. I don't have a lot of good memories from my own childhood, but the ones I do have are linked to something sensory, tactile. When she's older, her little blue boat will be packed to the gunwales with tactile memories. Little adventures she had with her dad will be summoned when she sees that shade of blue, or hears the sail in the wind, or holds the tiller in her hands—stuff that will make her smile before she even realizes why.

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### Get down and dirty.

Years ago, I was with a group of elementary- and middle-school students near a sloping bank of dirt. One of the kids decided to pour water down the bank, and everyone was so overjoyed by the mini mudslide it created that we decided to really go for it. More buckets were poured, and pretty soon we were sliding down the bank, getting mucky, and painting our faces with the mud or sculpting mud faces and creatures that we stuck to tree trunks. The kids were beaming. It was such a wonderful, memorable day. Every year since, kids have asked, "When can we do the mudslide?" or chanted, "Mudslide! Mudslide! Mudslide!" The experience was indelible partly because it was immersive, but also because everyone, even the grown-ups, felt so free—not worried about the dirt or anything—and the kids were leading the way.

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### Plan an old-fashioned visit.

In Jane Austen's day, many women would visit their girlfriends for weeks at a time. We don't do that anymore. When we do decide to get together, many of us are more likely to plan a girls' weekend at a spa or some other extraordinary adventure. There's value in that, of course, but something special happens when you visit a friend in her everyday life, when you spend ordinary time with her. There's a depth and joy in the small moments—when you learn where she sits to have her coffee in the morning or which tree in her neighborhood is her favorite—that make them linger with us.

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### Add a soundtrack.

A song can transport you back to a special time. Music becomes layered with meaning each time you listen to it. You might be driving home from the pool when a song comes on the radio that gets you singing with the kids. That song may be forever linked to the joy of the day, the smell of chlorine, the games with friends. During their formative years, kids forge identities through music and choose songs that become part of their playlists. Later, that music conjures the joy of those early experiences and brings the past to the present.

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### Put away the camera.

My memories of a trek in the Himalayas are still so vivid that even now I can smell the mountain air, because I finally learned to stay still. That lesson came in part from forgetting to pick up my camera because I was so present. I started to make the choice not to reach for a device and to focus on capturing the feeling in my mind and body. Today, when I come across something special, like musicians playing, I stop to appreciate the divinity of the music. Maybe I'll smile at someone who seems transported by it too. A connection like that only cements the feeling.

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