

November and December are some of the most magical months of the year for me. The weather cools down, I can wear sweaters and boots, and there is holiday spirit all around. When I go home for Thanksgiving, I love to sit down and talk to my parents about everything I've been doing 500 miles away from them. They listen to my stories with rapt attention every time. At Christmas, we travel to see our extended family in South Carolina. I love seeing how grown up my younger cousins are and visiting with the only cousin in my family who is my age. My grandmother enjoys hearing my stories, too, even in her old age. I have to slow down and talk a little louder, but I know she loves hearing about my life, even though she probably misses about half of what I say.

Every family does this at some point, whether it's over the phone because they simply can't make the trip this year or right in the living room with everyone gathered around a roaring fire. But here's the catch—none of these moments would be possible if we weren't able to put away our distractions. Admittedly, I don't have the best record of keeping my phone tucked away during family conversations, but I know that I miss a lot when I have it out. Before I had a phone, laptop, or tablet, I would put a puzzle together on the floor of my grandmother's living room. She and my grandfather would help me sometimes when they could. I used to knit with my mom while we chatted the hours away or watched a Christmas movie on Hallmark. I would follow Dad around the house while he blew the freshly fallen leaves off the porch, laughing until my sides hurt when I got leaves in my hair even though my nose was frozen from the cold.

We miss so many of those small moments when we're distracted by all this new technology. But one day, those moments will no longer be possible. You won't be able to make the trip; you'll have a newborn and can't stay out of town for too long; you'll have a new job; you'll move far away. So this holiday season, as you sit around the Thanksgiving table or open presents beside the Christmas tree, put away your distractions. Enjoy your family and be present with them. Play a game together or watch a family movie. Make an easy craft with the kids, then go outside and play in the leaves or snow. I promise you won't regret it. In fact, you'll cherish the memories for the rest of your life.