

Family Blackout Night

Pull out the flashlights and candles.
Turn off the lights.
Put away the devices.
And get ready for some unforgettable fun!



BetterScreenTime



WHAT INSPIRED THE FAMILY BLACKOUT NIGHT?

When I was a kid I remember hearing the sound of rolling thunder and watching the lighting surrounding my childhood home near the Grand Tetons. In the 80's, an afternoon thunderstorm sometimes meant a power outage. I have fond memories of piling into my parents' bed and at other times watching my dad build a fire in the fireplace—something we only used when the power went out or on special occasions. We roasted hot dogs and made shadow puppets on the wall. My mom always lit the same kerosene lantern. When the power went out there was no television and the phone lines were dead.

Do you remember those days? Power outages seem to be less common for those in developed countries, but I did live in the Dominican Republic for a year and a half and experienced power outages every single day!

I know many families have recently experienced power outages due to forest fires and other natural disasters. While none of us want to endure a real power outage for very long, it is a reminder of how reliant we've become on the technology that surrounds us.

In many ways we are safer and more secure than ever, and in other ways we've become so reliant on our devices that we've forgotten to rely on one another. This is even happening within the walls of our own homes.

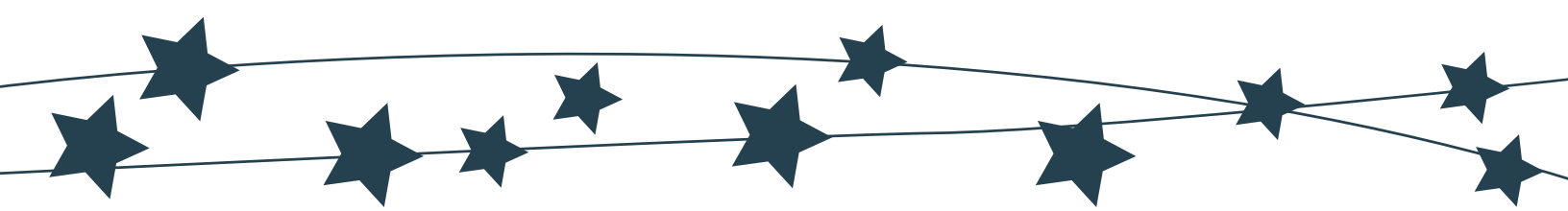
But, we refuse to believe that we're all doomed because of new technology. We just have to work a little harder to keep tech in its proper place. All tech-healthy families take regular breaks away from technology and spend time together. The Family Blackout Night is one way to help you do that.

Power outages were special when I was a kid because our family was all together. We were all dependent on the same source for light and heat, which meant we had to *gather*. Gathering is what brings us closer together.

HOW DO WE PULL OFF OUR OWN FAMILY BLACK OUT NIGHT? (ESPECIALLY IF WE HAVE TEENS?)

I asked our teen if she would help me pull together a Family Blackout Night. I shared my experiences of power outages as a kid and told her I'd like to recreate the same experience with our family. She was on board!

You could recruit any of your kids to help out with this. Getting the family involved helps them to anticipate the evening and to have buy-in. I always like to keep some elements of the evening a surprise. I put our teen in charge and she ran with it. Not all teens will do this, and that's okay. They will likely at least go to the store with you to pick out special snacks!



I sat down with our teen and we made a list of ideas that would make the evening special. We knew we needed to draw upon the five senses: sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch. She suggested a good smelling candle, we picked out some fairy lights on Amazon, we made a list of everyone's favorite snacks, she made a playlist (we did use our Google mini for some music at one point), and we gathered our softest blankets for the evening.

My teen took on some special assignments. She created handmade invitations for everyone in the family and slipped them under the bedroom doors. When everyone woke up in the morning, they had a special invitation lying on the floor. Since we had never had a blackout night, it caused quite a stir! Everyone was asking, "What's a blackout night?" It is always fun to create some anticipation.

She then created a black out box out of an old shoe-box. She cut out a slit on top of the box where family members could insert a slip of paper with their ideas. She then covered it with black construction paper and wrote on the box: "The Blackout Box" and "Write down a fun, electronic-free activity our family can do at home." It was sitting in the windowsill, so all the kids saw it when they came to breakfast the next morning.

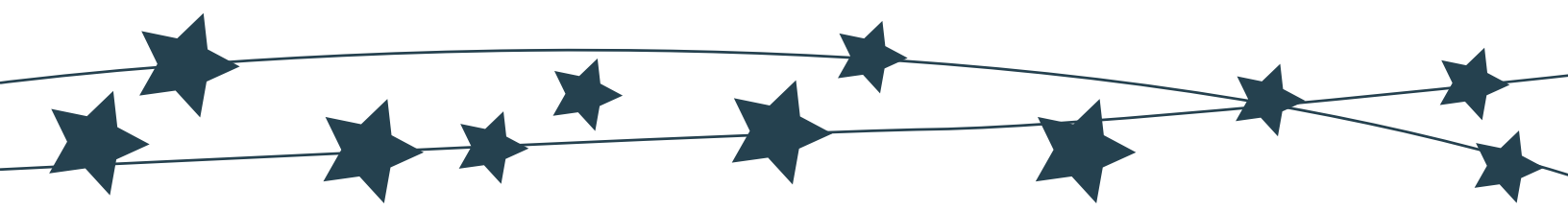
Our son cut up slips of paper and put them by the box so whenever anyone came up with an idea, they could write it down and put their slip of paper in the box. It's important to remind everyone to think of activities your family can do at home, that don't require a lot of prep or money. (We've included some of our ideas in this kit to get you started!) We left our box out for a week so kids had plenty of time to think of ideas.

Next, make a trip to the store for a few special snacks (or make a few) so they are ready to go. Be sure to hide them! You may also want to stock up on some glow sticks, a scented candle, or anything else that will make your night special.

Now if this all sounds overwhelming or impossible with your crew, see the next paragraph. :)

HOW CAN I MAKE THIS AS SIMPLE AS POSSIBLE?

Light some candles, turn off the lights, put away electronic devices and do whatever your family loves to do! Give your kids and spouse all of your attention. *That's it.*



LET'S DO THIS!

At the appointed time, get the kids involved! Your helper (whomever helped to plan the night) can get out all the special snacks. Someone else can light candles. Others can gather flashlights, battery operated lanterns, fairy lights, etc. Someone else can gather blankets and pillows and make your space cozy. Someone else can cue the playlist (optional—you may prefer silence). Then finally, one person can hit the lights! Now, pull out your blackout box and get ready to have some fun.

You may want to pull out your phone once to snap some photos (only a few then put it away!). If you do, we'd love it if you share on social media (or email us and we'll share!) and use #familyblackoutnight. We can't wait to see how your family pulls this off!

ANY OTHER RESOURCES I CAN USE?

Our online course [Creating a Tech-Healthy Family](#) can help you get your own tech habits in place and lead your family in a series of conversations so your family can work together to keep tech in its proper place. Then, a family blackout night will just seem like the icing on the cake because your family will already have good tech habits in place!

After doing our own blackout, we discovered a few new books with a similar theme. *30 Day Blackout: How to Help Your Kids Turn Off the Screen and Turn to Their Family* by Stacy Jagger and *24/6: The Power of Unplugging One Day a Week* by Tiffany Shlain. Both of these books include additional ideas to help your family take a break from tech. You can find both of these books on our resources page: betterscreentime.com/resources

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We're here cheering you on!

Tyler, Andrea, & the BST Community

#familyblackoutnight



Family Blackout Night Ideas

PLAY NO BEARS
ARE OUT
TONIGHT.

SING SILLY
SONGS (THINK
CAMPFIRE
SONGS!)

PLAY YOUR
FAVORITE CARD
OR BOARD
GAME.

DO A CAKE
WALK.



PLAY
CHARADES.

READ ALOUD!
PICK A CHAPTER
OUT OF A
FAVORITE BOOK.

WRITE IN YOUR
JOURNALS FOR
FIVE MINUTES.

HAVE A LEG
WRESTLING
CONTEST.





Family Blackout Night Ideas

PULL OUT SOME
OLD CLOTHES
OR DRESS UPS
AND MAKE UP
SKITS.

HAVE A DANCE
PARTY!

MAKE SHADOW
PUPPETS OR DO
HAND SHADOW
PUPPETS.

TELL GHOST
STORIES.



PUT ON A
TALENT SHOW.

DIVIDE UP AND
CREATE A
TREASURE HUNT
WITH CLUES FOR
THE OTHER
TEAM.

PLAY HIDE AND
GO SEEK OR
SARDINES.

MAKE A FORT
TOGETHER.





Family Blackout Night Ideas

MAKE FLASHLIGHT COOKIES (NO-BAKE COOKIES) OR CREATE YOUR OWN NEW 'FLASHLIGHT' RECIPE.

SPOTLIGHT EACH PERSON IN THE FAMILY. ONE PERSON GOES UNDER THE 'SPOTLIGHT' (FLASHLIGHT) AND EVERYONE TELLS THEM WHAT THEY LOVE ABOUT THEM!

DO YOGA OR MEDITATION TOGETHER.

PLAY (YOUR LAST NAME) FAMILY GAME SHOW. ONE PARENT IS THE HOST AND THEY PULL UP EACH CONTESTANT TO HAVE THEM PERFORM OR SOLVE. (MATH PROBLEM, TALENT, FAMILY HISTORY QUESTION, ETC.)



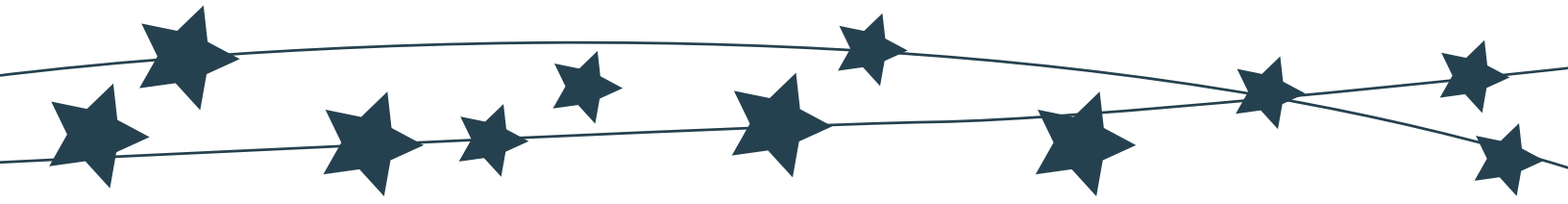
HAVE A PICNIC ON THE LIVING ROOM FLOOR.

MAKE A PLAN FOR A REAL BLACKOUT OR UPDATE YOUR FAMILY'S EMERGENCY PLAN.

MAKE AN OBSTACLE COURSE COMPLETE WITH GLOW STICKS AND FLASHLIGHTS.

HAVE HOT COCOA AND SHARE FAVORITE FUNNY MEMORIES.





Create Your Own Ideas!

