

Cure for a Boring Summer: "Hidden Gems" Adventure Guides

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Families, couples, and individuals looking for meaningful ways to connect and have fun can explore dozens of free activity guides through Utah State University Extension's award-winning "Hidden Gems" adventure guide program. Each guide includes research-based relationship and social-emotional learning activities designed to strengthen communication, trust, and family connections.

According to Naomi Brower, USU Extension professor and project lead, spending intentional time together helps strengthen families and supports positive youth development.

"Research shows that children who spend quality time with family often experience better academic outcomes and fewer behavioral problems," she said. "The purpose of these guides is to strengthen family and relationship connections through having fun together."

The Hidden Gems Adventure Guides offer inexpensive, engaging experiences families can enjoy at home, outdoors, or in their communities. The guides also include activities for couples and individuals that are focused on emotional wellness and healthy relationships.

Brower said each guide is designed as a one-hour activity that focuses on specific life skills or social-emotional concepts such as communication, creativity, confidence, mindfulness, healthy choices, trust, and problem-solving.

Examples of activities include scavenger hunts, baking projects, science-themed games, neighborhood adventures, hiking experiences, family history activities, and relationship-building date ideas. Specific titles include Amazing Astronauts, Pirate Palooza, Money Talks, Superhero Training, and Baking Connection, among others.

The Hidden Gems program has earned multiple awards, including the 2025 Florence Hall Award from the National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, the 2024 Best of State Award for curriculum development, and the 2024 Innovative Program Award from the Utah Association of Extension 4-H Youth Development Professionals.

In addition to family-focused guides, Brower said Extension's "Living Your Best Life" series encourages single adults to explore local destinations while reflecting on personal growth, mindfulness, and emotional well-being. Several locations include the Wind Caves in Logan Canyon, Ogden Botanical Gardens, the USU Sculpture Walk, and others.

Hidden Gems Adventure Guides are free for download at [Hidden Gems Adventure Guides](#).

Contact

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