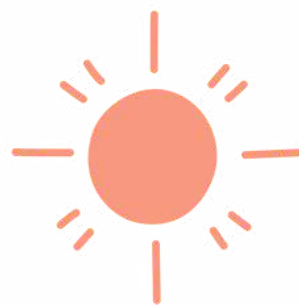




HOW TO MAKE 2024

YOUR FAMILY'S



Best Year Yet

It would be easy to jump in and start planning your best year yet for 2024, but wait!!

There's one step before that.

I believe there's a power in pausing to reflect on the year you are leaving as well.

We do that with a New Year's Eve Party or Closing Ceremony!

One year I was just tired of it. I was tired of staying up way too late on New Year's Eve, and then the whole family waking up groggy and grumpy on New Year's Day with nothing to show for it. The new year is supposed to be a time for fresh starts and new beginnings, and just barely making it through the day on Jan 1 until it was time to go bed again just didn't feel like how I wanted to start my new year.

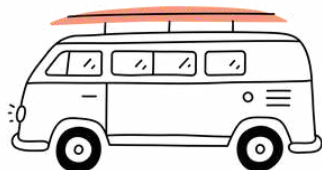
I wanted to kick the new year off in a way that felt more meaningful. And here's where the idea was born for our New Year's Eve Closing Ceremony.

It takes a little prep, but it's so worth it!

Our New Year's Eve plans consist of 3 main activities

1. Reflection (do this part earlier!)
2. Year End 'Family Awards' Ceremony
3. Vision Boards

Here's a breakdown of how we do our year-end Closing Ceremony:



A STEP BY STEP: HOW-TO HAVE THE BEST NEW YEAR'S EVE CLOSING CEREMONY



1. Reflection

We believe you have to look back before you can look forward. There's something so fulfilling about spending a few minutes in reflection about the year you are leaving behind.

The way we do this is a few days before new years we sit down together as a family and take turns asking these questions, and letting each family member have a chance to share. You could ask these in a group setting like we did, or ask in a more intimate 1 on 1 setting! If your kids are old enough, you could even encourage them to write their answers and then share them.

YEAR END REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

(These questions + more are all included in a printable pdf at the end!)

- What was your biggest struggle or challenge this year?
- What did you not like about this year?
- What are you most grateful for this year?
- What is the biggest lesson you learned?
- What are you most excited about for next year?
- What's important to you next year?
- What is something you think our family could focus on next year?

Later Chris and I take all of this feedback and have a conversation about what we think our family could focus or work on next year to help our family unit run more smoothly. The last few years we actually narrow it all down to 1-3 words to focus on that can guide us through the entire year. For example in 2020 our word was "Team" because we felt like our family needed to focus on working together, playing together, and encouraging each other. In 2019 our word was "Kind-hearted" because we wanted to see more kindness. In 2018 one of our words was "Constant" because we felt like we wanted to be more consistent in our habits, etc. We also encourage each of our kids to choose a personal word for themselves every year!

2. Family Awards Ceremony

The other thing Chris and I do in this conversation is review the activities/challenges/triumphs from last year that each family was a part of. From there we assign each family member a unique award. For example, a child that didn't make a sports team in the spring, but tried out again in the fall might be awarded "most determined." Or a child that started at a new school and made new friends might be awarded "most friendly" or "most brave." I like to focus on things that are reflective of their character or the type of person that they are, rather than something that they have accomplished or a physical characteristic.

Next you would fill out the awards certificate with each recipient's specific info. I included one for you at the end!

The last thing left to do is to have the awards ceremony! We usually do it on New Year's Eve as part of our New Year's Eve celebration.

Here's what our New Year's Eve usually looks like::

- Nice Dinner
- Awards Ceremony
- Vision Boards
- Snacks/Games/Fireworks, etc



I'll break them each down for you here:

Dinner:

I let the kids weigh in on what they want for dinner. We usually choose to have a nice dinner with candles, etc. You could just as easily order take-out or pizza. We sit down together and enjoy dinner as a family. Last year, we had some friends that spent the whole night with us as well and participated in the whole evening! They made their own individual family awards & vision boards, but we did the awards ceremony and everything together. Each family just took turns presenting to a family member!

The Ceremony:

The ceremony can be as grand or as simple as you like. Maybe you dress up fancy and it's an actual awards ceremony. Or maybe you just all sit on the couch in your p.j.s. The important thing is that you sit down together, and one by one bring each family member to the front of the room and present them with their certificate. Take a minute and explain exactly what you see in this person and why they are receiving this award this year. Watch them light up! Proceed with the remaining family members. Close the ceremony by congratulating the family on a fantastic (even if challenging) year.

3. Vision Boards

From there we all create vision boards. If you've never done a vision board before it is basically a visual reminder or representation of who you want to be, or what you want to accomplish in the coming year. Some of the family likes to create their board by printing out exactly what pictures they want via a google search. Others like to flip through magazines and cut and paste onto a board with more of an intuitive approach. I always like to see what the preschoolers put on their boards. It's always entertaining yet reflective of what gets them excited and what they're passionate about! There really is no right way to do it. You may find it helpful to refer back to the reflection questions "What is important to you?" or "What are you most excited for next year?" Those answers could give you some guidance about a good starting place for your vision board! Each person also includes their word for the year on their board.

When most people are wrapping up with their boards we give them the opportunity to share them with each other at the front of the room. I like to work on mine for longer than the kids do, so if someone's not done they just share what they have so far! The boards will then go on display in each person's room, or somewhere where they can see it often.

Party time:

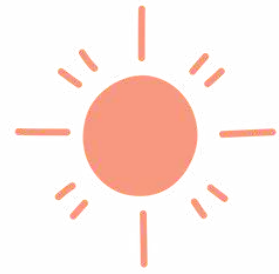
The rest of the evening is spent playing games, eating food, fireworks, whatever! And that's basically it! I love waking up on New Year's Day feeling like I already have a focus and intention for my new year!

We also did an entire podcast episode on this subject if you're wanting more details! [Check it out here](#)

Blog post with more pictures:

[Link to blog post here](#)





NOW we're ready to make 2024 your family's best year yet!

"Could next year be the best year of my life?"

That was the thought that came to me at the end of 2020 as I was reflecting on my year, and preparing for our New Year's Eve Closing Ceremony and party.

As I asked myself the reflection questions that we always do, I had the thought again,

"Could next year be the best year of my life?" my mind started finding evidence as to why it was impossible.

We were still in the middle of a pandemic with no end in sight. There was social and economic uncertainty. The activities our children loved to take part in were all still canceled.

This year, those reasons might sound something like, "Inflation is too high. Interest rates are even higher. There is STILL social and economic uncertainty."

But what if none of that matters? What if despite what is happening in the world, I declare that this will be my best year ever, and create it to be?

That is what I have come to love about the power of language and creation. We all get to declare what it is we want in life and then do the work to create it. It all begins with the declaration.

I set a personal intention for 2021 to make it the best year of my life, put it on my vision board, and outlined a plan for how to make it happen. Then, a couple of weeks later I had the same thought for my family.

Could 2021 be the best year in the history of our family? That one I couldn't answer alone.

On a Monday night after dinner, we gathered in the living room for our weekly family team meeting. I posed the same question to the entire family. "Do you think we could have the best year we have ever had as a family?" I felt a power in asking the question. Almost by asking the question we were setting that as an intention. Each member of the family sat in silence for a few moments and then...

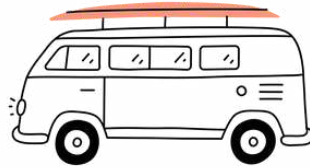
"Definitely!"

"I think so."

"Yeah, for sure."

"Last year was pretty great, so why not."

"Yep."



Some were more enthusiastic than others, but all were in agreement that 2021 could, in fact, be our best year ever as a family. I shared with them the process I had taken myself through. Because if 2021 was going to be our best year ever, it wouldn't be enough to declare it.

There would be vision, work, and commitment involved.

Looking back now, 2021 WAS pretty epic.

Here's what we did to make it so:

Once we set our intention for 2021 to be our best year ever, here is what we did next.

- 1. Took an honest assessment of where we are now.*
- 2. Identified what would make this the best year ever.*
- 3. Put together a plan to make it happen.*

1. Honest assessment of where you are now:

Before we can know where we are going, we have to know where we are. This is an incredible opportunity to have each member of your family rate your family, and themselves, in the areas most important to you.

Those areas could be family unity, kindness, spending time together, health, serving others, hobbies, etc... The key is to identify what is most important to YOUR family and then see where each of you stands in relation to what is most important.

For our family, we took our family values that we have repeated every morning for years and rated ourselves against them on a scale of 1 - 10.

1 meaning we aren't living them at all, 10 meaning we are nearly perfect.

It was really eye-opening for each of us to see where we were.



For example, We say “Smiths do hard things” How would we individually rate ourselves at our ability to do hard things?

How about “Smiths love and support one another?” How are we each realistically measuring up to that?

Once we know where we are, we are empowered to go where we want.

Also, it is important to assess and share without any judgment or fixing at this stage. We are simply creating the baseline of where we are today.

Michael Hyatt divides life into 10 domains including spirituality, intellectual life, emotional life, physicality, marriage, parenthood, social relationships, work, hobbies, and finances. You could also use these domains to rate yourself if you don’t know where to start!

2. What would make this the best year ever?

It isn’t enough to just say we are going to have the best year ever.

What would need to happen for that to be true?

We had each member of the family make two columns:

Personal

Family



First, we had everyone write what would have this year be their best year ever personally.

Things like learning to surf, playing sports, exploring our new surroundings, (we had just moved to to the North Shore of Oahu the month before!) and making new friends were at the top of people’s lists.

We felt the only way for us to have our best year as a family was if every individual had an intention to make this THEIR best year yet.

Everyone then answered the question collectively-

What would have to happen as a family to make this the best year yet?



3. Create a plan to make it happen

This is where it gets real :)

At this point, you know where you are as a family and what you want to create. Now, make a plan to make it happen.

We call this plan our 'Creation List'.

We don't want to see these things as to-do's, but rather opportunities to create.

Deadlines and calendars are essential here.

Here are a few things we identified that would help make 2021 our best year as a family.

- Everyone learning to surf so we can go on family surf sessions
- Planting a garden
- Traveling to different islands
- Creating a cool, creative space for homeschool

Here is an example of how they would be reflected on our creation list:

Everyone learning to surf so we can go on family surf sessions

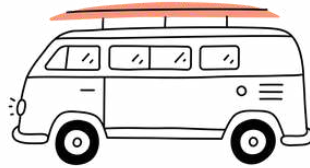
- Buy surfboards for each family member.
- Find a surf instructor
- Help our kids come up with ideas to earn money to purchase their boards
- Get in the ocean 5 days a week
- Teach Tripp and Indie how to swim so they can start surfing
- Set a date on the calendar when we will have everyone's boards bought

Plant a garden

- Research planting and growing season in Hawaii
- Identify type of garden...beds or rows
- Buy plants and seeds
- Set a date on the calendar when we will build and plant the garden.

Traveling to different islands

- Do some research to select where we want to visit
- Set a date on the calendar to leave
- Purchase plane tickets



Don't forget to include your ideas from the first exercise as well!

For example, if we identified that our family scored ourselves as wanting to do better at "Smiths do Hard Things" How could we incorporate that into our plan for the year?

Maybe we identify some hikes that we could do together that would challenge us, maybe we sign up for some type of race together, or tackle a challenging project in the yard.

Remember those vision boards that we talked about making at the beginning? It's a good idea to make sure that these things have a place on your vision boards for the year as well!

Once it's all outlined, now is the time to make sure it's in the calendar.

Weekly, we review our plans during our weekly family team meeting.

Plans can change and adjust throughout the year as needed if new plans or ideas come up!

For example, our landlord in Hawaii didn't want us putting in garden beds, or a chicken coop so we ended up choosing the plants we wanted, and put the plants in pots.

Life is always changing and your plan for your best year ever can be flexible and adapt.

The important thing is that you are living your year by design, and not by default.

Are you ready to begin making 2024 the best year yet for your family?

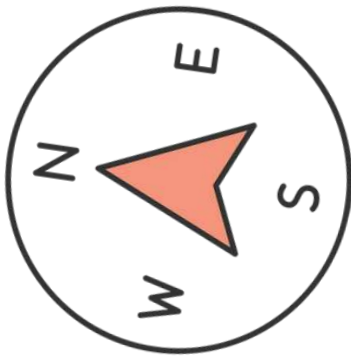
It IS possible.

Let's do it!

HERE'S TO YOU!

NAME: _____

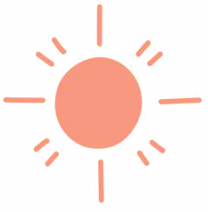
AWARDED FOR: _____



(YEAR)
Family Awards

CEREMONY

SIGNED



Year End Questions

What were the highlights for you this year?

What was your biggest struggle or challenge this year?

What did you not like about this year?

What are you most grateful for this year?

What is the biggest lesson you learned?

What are you most proud of personally this year?

What is something you think our family could focus on next year?

What's important to you next year?

What are you most excited about for next year?

