



Once “Family Movie Night” is established in your home, the whole family will look forward to this special time! The whole package deal will be so cherished that even on a night when the movie turns out to not be as good as hoped for, or one child has to give in to another child’s choice, these things won’t even matter that much.

**ALL family movies should be filtered or pre-reviewed by parents, no matter who recommends it.**

Please follow the link at the bottom for tools that are good for filtering and Tracy Lamperti’s “Favorite Family Movie List.”

**Schedule the Date**

You might want to have a “family night” and rotate movie night, game night, special dinner night...don’t worry so much about frequency. Families can have lots of spontaneous moments of fun, but in establishing traditions, planning is very important, especially for busy families and to help children learn the advantages of thinking ahead.

**Be Prepared**

Make sure you have the movie on hand, that you have looked at reviews, previewed the movie if you feel necessary and have a “plan b” in case you need to abandon the first choice.

**Make it Fun**

Parents are very busy these days! Try not to convey the message that “Family Movie Night” is a chore. Establishing FMN can be a bit of work but once your family has all of the rituals down, it will go smoothly.

- Consider ordering or making pizza or something else your family really likes and is easy for you to prepare.
- Bring out the comfy pillows and maybe blankets or sleeping bags.
- Set the lighting for the right mood.
- Boundaries are helpful. Once the movie starts we all settle down and watch. Schedule a potty break or snack/drink refill break. Too many disruptions reduce the fun factor.

**Have Good Snacks**

Traditional movie theater snacks can be a fun treat for FMN. Cups with covers help to avoid accidents that disrupt the movie and upset everyone. Be careful about sugar so close to bed.

**Set a Theme**

Take turns deciding who picks the movie or if there will be a special theme, such as holiday or comedy. Some family members are really creative and plan snacks around a theme or even make crafty movie tickets or funny hats!

## **Plan**

Especially for younger children, showering and getting pjs on ahead of time can help to avoid issues like children being too tired to do those things after the movie. It is best to keep it to just washing hands and brushing teeth after the movie. Try not to get started too late.

## **Filter Distractions**

Turn off your ringer. Shut down your social media. Children are more perceptive than we sometimes think. They will know if you are not fully present. The kids should put their devices away as well.

## **No Skipping**

A good policy is that on family movie night, the whole family watches the movie. It is just understood that in good faith, a movie will be chosen where there is a reasonable expectation that everyone will get something out of, even if they have to stretch themselves. It is good to bear with one another and participate with one another as a family, because we are a family. The same concept applies for family meals. We work together and give and take when it is or isn't our favorite. Children feel good about participating even if the movie (or meal) wasn't their choice. Children learn in families, about taking turns, treating each other nicely and working together. Sometimes they realize they have actually enjoyed the movie, when they assumed they would hate it. But even if not, we are a family and we support each other and enjoy life with each other, even when we aren't getting our own way. Increase the fun factor of family movie night so that even when it isn't Johnny's night to choose, he will want to come because of the other factors.

## **Uh-oh, that movie wasn't a good choice.**

Yes, we sometimes have regrets after a movie. At times when you feel that you have exposed your child to a theme or experience that was not appropriate and you did not have the wisdom at the time to turn it off, be sure and talk about it afterwards. It is important to tell our children when we have erred in our judgment and exposed them to something that we then regret. There are also times when something may seem harmless at the time and then you see your child playing out a theme that makes you uneasy and you know exactly where they picked it up. Maybe your child is strutting around like a sassy character on a Barbie movie, or maybe having bad dreams. Use this opportunity to **connect with your child**, guide them and build trust with them. You might think your new sassy Barbie daughter needs scolding, but it actually might be most appropriate, especially if this is a bit out of character or more extreme than usual for your daughter, to have a little motherly sit-down and point some things out. "I notice you've had a bit of an unfriendly attitude lately, like when you..... yesterday. I'm thinking that this is kind of like the attitude of .....on the Barbie movie that you have been watching." Continue the conversation and try to engage your child in sharing some insight that they might have, now that you have pointed it out. Suggest, "Let's take a break from Barbie for about a week and see if the friendly you comes right back." It is the same thing with nightmares or other behaviors. "I'm noticing that these bad dreams started after you watched that lava scene on Star Wars. We may have made a mistake watching that scene. Let's not watch it again for awhile and I think you will start sleeping better pretty quickly."

## **"It was fine."**

All too often, I hear parents say, "Yes, they (a 4 year old) watched Indiana Jones. They were fine. It didn't seem to bother them at all." Typically, children stare at the TV screen. They listen and they watch. An occasional child will hide behind a chair until a scene is over, or cover their eyes or ask a parent to turn it off. But the MOST common occurrence is for children to sit and stare. Some parents will interpret this as everything being fine. It's better not to bank on that. We have to guide and direct our children and that includes helping to be their filters in the world. There is so much that we don't have control over, AND there is SO much that we do have control over.

## **"I'm preparing them for the real world."**

I have also heard many parents say that they have let their children watch movies with profanity or other bad behavior and rationalize it by saying, "but we talked about it and they know we

don't allow that kind of behavior." Some parents rationalize by saying it was a "good" thing because it provided an opportunity to talk about that kind of behavior and why it is not acceptable. This is also a weak argument that is only possibly strengthened by the type of behavior mentioned vs. the developmental stage of the child and maturity level. Foul language or surly themes in a movie are simply unnecessary, add nothing to the movie and should be filtered out.

"Favorite Family Movie List" <http://174.121.3.221/~tracylam/Favorite-Family-Movie-List.pdf>

I would love to hear about what your family does to make movie night special!

Post your stories on my fb <https://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Lamperti-Counseling-Consultation/205305462892981>

email me [lamperticc@gmail.com](mailto:lamperticc@gmail.com)

or send me a note on my "contact" page at [www.tracylamperti.com](http://www.tracylamperti.com)

Thanks,  
Tracy