



How do you define “ordinary?”

Modulating Family Atmosphere

It was an ordinary night one night last year at the Lamperti home. We were having an ordinary dinner, with our ordinary placemats and since it was a relaxed kind of a night, there were candles lit, which is ordinary on a relaxed night. Now...would it be ordinary if a laughing fit turned into milk spraying out someone’s nose?

Our 6 year old, Jessica was playing a game of “raise your hand if you like horses...purple hair...snakes...” Well, when she got to “spiders,” that’s when ordinary got a little fuzzy.

Noah, our 12 year old, began recounting the following story, which, might not sound that funny now, but turned our dinnertime upside down and *easily* could have turned into milk out the nose!

"My Sunday School teacher has a terrible fear of spiders. One time a spider dropped down in front of her while she was driving.....on the highway.....and she opened the door.....and jumped out. [ON THE HIGHWAY??] Her baby was ok though..... [her BABY was in the car!?] He was in his seat in the back and I guess the car coasted off to the side."

Well...I guess some of us have a very good ability to visualize things, as we were pretty hysterical at that point.

That story led into a story of being in a good sleep, when a spider happened by, too close to Daddy's nostril, at which point it got sucked in. "Next thing you know you're wide awake blowing spider legs out of your nose and worrying about where the rest of the spider is."

And then there was the Children's Choir Assistant, soulfully playing the piano while the children practiced their song, when her precious daughter shouts, "MOM!!! There's a spider on you!!!!" What followed was a good amount of screaming, jumping up and tearing the jacket off and all the little children laughing. I never did find out if it was a prank or real.

So all in all, if you are bored at the dinner table, or there is strife and fighting, start exchanging spider stories.

Seriously, the adults set the tone for the family. It is the adults, who thoughtfully and with proper intention need to modulate the atmosphere in the family. The tone might need to be brought down a bit, or brought up. Different children might have different needs for the tone at any given moment. Some nights call for some goofing off, but we have to be careful, lest we wind them up and then end up having to punish them. Some night in our house are definite “cups with covers and straws nights,” because the tension is already high enough and to have a milk spill might tip us over the edge.

But whatever you do, turn off the TV and interact. Make sure the children are active participants at the dinner table, coffee/juice hour, chore time, drives in the car, etc. Adults can pick a time when the children are in bed to have their adult time.

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