

The Dreaded Heart Attack

Our family's favorite activities on Family Home Evening nights included anything athletic: hiking, swimming, bike riding, or wall ball against the building that was just outside our back gate.¹ Despite knowing this, I still occasionally decided to take a chance on something different. While looking for an idea for a church gathering in *Big Ideas for Little Budgets*, I found a Heart Attack activity and thought it would be outstanding for our family. Essentially, it involves making hearts with messages of love, support, and encouragement.²

My husband, Gary, and I agreed that we ought to heart attack a sister in our ward who had recently been divorced and was having both health and employment problems. When we presented the idea to our children we were met with the typical adolescent anguish and guttural groans—in other words, a considerable amount of murmuring. Despite their unenthusiastic response, we decided to proceed with what we had planned.

After the opening prayer and song, the whole family gathered around the kitchen table with red construction paper, crayons, markers, and scissors. We each made a heart and then wrote something on it that told the heart attack recipient what we liked about her, how she was an example to us, or what made her unique. During this part of the evening and also during the drive to the sister's home, the barrage of complaints continued.

When we arrived near our destination, we stealthy stopped down the street. While my husband stayed with the get-away car, the rest of the family piled out quickly and quietly, collectively sneaking to the front door with the pre-taped hearts. After each person fastened their message to the door, they began running toward the car. One brave soul rang the doorbell and then sprinted away to safety.

After we climbed into the van and the door had been closed, a collective cheer went up with comments like, "That was cool!" and "Can we do it again?" The children all wanted to know who else they could heart attack. The evening was fabulous and fun and everyone felt great about what we had done. We drove home feeling happy and satisfied, and then finished our evening with a closing prayer and treats.

While some of our Family Home Evenings did not turn out the way I hoped they would, occasionally we created something that ended up practically perfect.

For me it was a "And thus we see..." moment that I often find in the scriptures. It helped me to understand that I need to forge ahead with good ideas despite the occasional opposition, and let the experience of kindness and service create the joy for which they were intended.

¹ See original publication: Gail H. Johnsen, "The Dreaded Heart Attack," *Deseret News*, July 10, 2010.

² Brad Wilcox and John Bytheway, *Big Ideas for Little Budgets* (Springville, Utah: Cedar Forts Publishing, 1995), 26.