

Chicago Tribune

Family

SUNDAY, MAY 30, 1999 ■ SECTION 13



It worked for me

Every summer, when family schedules are less hectic, we put on our artist caps and paint a picture together. The value of this art project is that it is something done by our family as a group, and reminds us that family-making is fun. It also makes everyone feel attached, connected and part of the family.

We go to the local art store and buy acrylic paints, brushes and a large canvas, preferably the kind that is stretched and ready to hang.

Because there are five of us, we divide our canvas into six spaces with a light

pencil mark. The extra space is shared. Directions are simple: colors, techniques, themes and time used are entirely open to each "artist." We've discovered that each person prefers to paint alone, and the entire project takes a day.

It's important to sign and date your art. As we look back at each painting, proudly displayed in our home, we are reminded of that year together, our individual creativity, and the value of our family bond. An astonishingly integrated painting—and family—emerges.

Susan Smith KuczmarSKI

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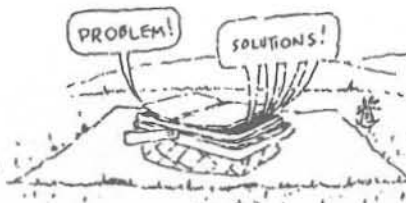
Family

SUNDAY, APRIL 25, 1999 ■ SECTION 13

It worked for me

When the weather starts getting warmer, picnics become one of our family's favorite activities. We always use the same beige blanket.

Spread out on the living room floor, our blanket brings that same special spirit to indoor meetings to hash out family problems. As our three children have gotten older and larger (and more independent), it's an increasingly snug fit. We use every corner to resolve issues, diffuse tension and add humor to discussions.



Each family member may bring up any problem or frustration. A solution or course of action is reached together. We recently needed to sit on the blanket and deal with the problem of household chores. Not everyone was doing his part. The solution from the picnic blanket was that each child would take responsibility for three specific chores he liked to do and did well.

So, when family life is no picnic, try sitting together on a blanket to work it out.

Susan Smith KuczmarSKI, Chicago