

# This Fun Friday Night Family Ritual Taught Me a Surprising Lesson About AI and Creativity

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He wanted to make a video where our dog, Calvin, cooked up scrambled eggs with green onions. So we opened Sora, typed in a prompt and watched a pixelated masterpiece come to life. It was weird. And wonderful. And most of all, it was *ours*.

That was the spark.

Since then, we regularly gather for what's become a tradition: Prompt Parties. They're our family ritual where imagination leads, AI follows, and joy is the goal, not the output.

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## Why we started Prompt Parties and why they stuck

Like many parents working in tech, I've had to confront some big questions:

- How do I introduce AI to my kids without overwhelming

them?

- How do I make it feel like a tool, not a threat?

The answer, I've learned, is play.

Our Prompt Parties are casual. Pancakes optional. We brainstorm ideas, type in prompts and generate AI videos or images together using tools like Sora. Then we laugh, critique, remix and sometimes fall down rabbit holes of absurdity.

One week, the prompt was:

***“Create the most photorealistic close-up of a blister pack of 8 pills, but instead of pills, there are tiny, adorable octopuses in different colors and textures. Each octopus is fully visible in side view, squished gently into its compartment like a soft gummy, but looking cheerful and content.”***

The result? “Happy Octopus Pills.” A serotonin hit disguised as AI art. Feel free to try these on your own; I'd love to see what the output is.

That same day, my son Kai asked if Calvin (our side-eyeing dog) could wear a top hat and judge people like a Victorian aristocrat. We obliged:

***“Dog side-eyeing like it knows your secrets. Make the side eye more intense. Have him wearing a top hat and human clothes.”***

We've made LEGO towers with real-life bears in clown makeup. We've explored haunted castles and invented cereal mascots. There are no rules. Just prompts and possibility.

# The science behind silliness

Shawn Achor, the positive psychology researcher behind *The Happiness Advantage*, argues that happiness isn't a luxury; it's a precursor to performance. Joy improves creativity, resilience and cognitive ability.

And guess what?

AI makes joy accessible in entirely new ways. It rewards curiosity, makes ideas tangible and bridges the gap between imagination and execution.

For kids, it's magic. For adults, it's a masterclass in thinking differently.

When we turn AI into play, we reduce the fear factor. We shift the narrative from "this tech will replace you" to "this tech can *collaborate* with you." And that's a lesson worth learning early.

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## Building AI literacy without the creep factor

Let's be real: Some parts of AI feel a little dystopian. Deepfakes. Chatbots impersonating humans. Kids don't need all of that.

What they *do* need is agency.

Here's how we keep Prompt Parties joyful and grounded:

- **Use bounded, kid-safe tools.** We use Sora, not Midjourney. And we steer clear of tools that generate ultra-realistic humans or open-ended chat. We don't ever

use images of them or real people.

- **Stay involved.** Every prompt goes through me. We sit side by side. If a result feels off, we talk about it. Not with fear, but with curiosity.
- **Celebrate their ideas.** Whether the prompt results in a perfectly rendered image or a total flop, we cheer the attempt. It's not about what the AI makes. It's about what *they* imagined.
- **Turn screen time into story time.** Most creations begin as drawings, stories or re-enacted scenes with stuffed animals. This feeds into active play and imagination later. AI is the spark, not the endpoint.

## What Prompt Parties have taught *me*

I started this as a way to teach my kids about AI. But I've learned just as much in the process.

- **Originality beats polish.** The octopus pill pack wasn't technically perfect. But it made us laugh, think and *feel*. That's the metric that matters.
- **Emotions drive retention.** A child who gets to *play* with AI will remember how it works far more than one who just reads about it.
- **We're not raising consumers. We're raising creators.** The real win isn't AI literacy, it's creative confidence. When kids learn they can steer technology, not just consume it, you change the trajectory of how they'll interact with the world.

# A surprising takeaway: Creativity is a form of courage

Here's what I didn't expect when we started Prompt Parties:

The courage it takes for a child to say an idea out loud before they know how it will turn out. To imagine something no one's ever seen. To press "generate" without knowing what they'll get back.

That's not just play. That's bravery.

And it reminded me: Creativity isn't about talent. It's about permission. Permission to be original. To be ridiculous. To be seen.

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These parties aren't just building AI fluency. They're building resilience, voice and self-trust.

Because the world they're growing up in won't just reward knowledge. It will reward perspective. The ability to think differently, speak clearly and imagine what doesn't yet exist.

And that starts with a question: *What if?*

Each Friday, we ask a simple question: *What do you want to create today?*

That question has generated more laughter, connection and creative spark than anything else I've tried as a parent.

So, if you're wondering how to bring AI into your home without the creepy vibes, start there.

Give your kids the prompt (and the permission) to play.

Because teaching them how to be curious, thoughtful, joyful

humans in an AI world might just be the most powerful lesson of all.

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