

Parenting Together

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The Importance of Family Traditions

In our household, we love Sunday mornings. Each week, we have one of the same two rotating breakfasts: Pancakes or waffles with "stuff." What is "stuff" you may wonder...well, it is berries and banana smashed up and mixed with yogurt and a touch of maple syrup and is absolutely delicious on top of pancakes and waffles. I (mom) am in charge of making the breakfast while my husband and kids tackle the "stuff." Our children are young (2 & 3), but they already know and look forward to our Sunday breakfasts.

There is one remarkable, powerful thing that the happiest families do well that most other families do not do at all. They establish traditions. Now, I know that when you hear the word, "tradition," it can be easy to jump straight to thinking, "That sounds too hard." or "It's too much work." but it doesn't have to be.

Family traditions help life make sense to our children. Like routines, traditions provide predictability and a sense of security and safety. Family traditions help children feel as though they fit in somewhere. And in time, the traditions each family has come to define who each person in the family is, countering alienation, and offering steadiness and certainty.

Traditions differ from our routines or habits because we carry out traditions with a specific purpose and degree of intention—we are trying to achieve something specific in order to create bonds, share values, promote shared experience, and build memories. Whereas routines are designed to become automatic and to make life simpler, traditions are about being mindful of the moment and are designed to demand attention and add meaning to life. Traditions don't need to be big ordeals. They can be small and simple - as simple as a fun Sunday family breakfast...maybe even one with a silly name.

Research has shown that the practice of family traditions can have a significant and important role in increasing social connection and for reducing anxiety - especially in teen years. Those who take part in family traditions also tend to experience less depression. Having those family connections and traditions provide deep roots where our children's self-esteem and well-being can develop and grow, and can help to protect them from the stresses of life

If you like the idea of creating and starting some of your own family traditions, here are some ideas that you can use as they are or alter and make them your own:

Daily Traditions

- Playing a wake-up song or game each morning. This can get everyone up on time and with a positive attitude
- Saying hello and/or goodbye in a special way (could be a special saying, handshake, etc.)
- Eating dinner as a family as often as possible and each person sharing their favorite part of their day

Weekly Traditions

Some of these traditions may turn into daily habits - but with more meaning behind them!

- A regular family meal one day of the week (breakfast, dinner, etc.)
- Playing or watching a particular sport on the weekend
- Friday night movie or games with a favorite dinner (or special treats!)
- Special time with parent and child(ren) focused on what your child wants to do

Other Traditions

Not all traditions happen regularly. Some might be seasonal or even yearly.

- Camping trips (away from home or even in your own backyard or living room)
- Holiday/cultural/religious traditions (decorating, baking, etc.)
- A trip to the coast the first weekend of summer
- Making the first fire of the season (fireplace, fire pit, etc.)

Traditions are about recognizing the uniqueness of your family identity, and should be fun, simple, and designed to bring you closer together. Be mindful of what you do with your family and when you find something you all love, find a way to repeat it regularly and make it a part of your family's identity. Before you know it, you'll start reaping the rewards of having created a new tradition!

The Book Nook

Our Favorite Day of the Year
by A.E. Ali

Daddy Christmas and Hanukkah Mama
by Selina Alko

The remembering day = El dia de los muertos
by Pat Mora

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orparenting.org

References

The Importance of Family Traditions

<https://youthfirstinc.org/the-importance-of-family-traditions/>

Family Traditions Help Kids Make Sense of Life

<https://ifstudies.org/blog/family-traditions-help-kids-make-sense-of-life/>

Family Traditions Build Strong Families

<https://www.parentingsuccessnetwork.org/family-traditions-build-strong-families/>