

Creating New Family Traditions

1st September 2021

Traditions are rituals that we often hold dear, having special meaning to the family and giving us a way to celebrate our shared culture. However, there may be times when we feel pressured by family traditions to do things a certain way. For example, the festive season, which is meant to be the “most wonderful time of the year,” can sometimes be a strain given all the pressure and expectation to have fun and for everyone to get along. This could result in just going through the motions of traditions and rituals, making it all feel more like a chore than an expression of joy.

In addition, family dynamics may change—perhaps there is a divorce, death of a loved one, or families are blended into new, beautiful yet challenging constellations. As time passes, old traditions may not seem suitable for you and your family or for the values you want to foster in your children. Creating new traditions with your family—or even with your friends—can be a powerful way to reclaim a connection to yourself and your loved ones.

What is a tradition?

A tradition or ritual is an action or series of actions that you perform more than once, often at a specific time of the day or of the year. Traditions are often associated with religion, as every religion has traditions in some form, as part of its practice. But not all traditions are religious: blowing out candles on a birthday cake, watching the fireworks on New Year’s Eve, and ANZAC Day are all examples of secular traditions.

Why are traditions important?

Traditions have a lot of positive effects on families and social groups. Here are some wonderful benefits of traditions:

- connect generations and strengthen bonds within a family or community
- foster a sense of identity, especially when they are unique
- provide security and comfort during times of change, upheaval, and grief
- can teach important values
- create memories
- add rhythm to the year or week

© LifeWorks 2020

heartbeat+

Creating New Family Traditions

1st September 2021

How to create traditions

Creating traditions is something you can do with your family, so everyone feels connected to the practice itself. Here's how to get started:

- First, identify what you already do that counts as a tradition.
- Then ask, "is this tradition serving me and my family?" "Does it need to change or be replaced with something that suits us better, or do we like it as it is?"
- Then, come up with something new. Perhaps you want to light candles if you didn't before. Maybe you want to meditate together. Write a song or a poem. Maybe your new tradition is culinary. (Is there a new food item that is more connected to your family now than the kind of thing you ate growing up?) Whatever it is, creating something new with your loved ones is a wonderful bonding activity.

Incorporate traditions all year round

While you may start making new traditions around the festive season, consider bringing traditions into all parts of the year—some can be daily, others weekly, and others can only happen once or twice annually. Have fun with it, that's the best part of creating traditions yourself: you and your family (or chosen family) can truly enjoy them!