

ORDINARY MAGIC

In this Building Block of Resilience, we focus our attention on family traditions and celebrations.

At first glance, topics like these may seem rather straightforward and simple...maybe even too simple. And, in many respects, they are. But the power of resilience in families typically does not involve highly complex and complicated processes. Rather, resilience mostly appears through small, seemingly ordinary activities that, when engaged in over time, can lead to dramatic changes in the lives of individuals and families. As one of the leading researchers of resiliency has observed, resilience comes from the “ordinary magic” of family life.

FAMILY TRADITIONS AND CELEBRATIONS

Throughout history, traditions and celebrations have provided cultures and societies with means of connection and unity. And family life is no different. Within a family, traditions and celebrations help infuse unique meaning, cohesion, and solidarity into family life. For a family, these activities can help connect us to our past, to our community, and perhaps most importantly, to each other.

DEFINING TRADITIONS

What makes something a tradition? Although various definitions exist, traditions and celebrations can generally be thought of as planned habits with

significance. Things you do as a family, repeated over time, and with a specific purpose. Different traditions will have different purposes, but commonly involve items such as passing family values to the next generation, building family relationships, and connecting your family to a broader community. They might include a special recipe passed down across generations or a prayer said before each meal.

GETTING STARTED

So, if having family traditions and celebrations is important, where should you start? Consider two options. As one option, work on implementing with consistency a tradition you already have (or want to have!). This activity may be something you used to do but stopped, or something you did as a child and now want to start in your own family. Maybe there is a special way to greet the day when the children wake up or bedtime stories.

As a second option, you can start a new tradition or celebration. Start small and simple, but most importantly, just do something. How about a secret family handshake? Pancakes for Saturday breakfast? And remember, for traditions and celebrations to occur, they do not just happen. It takes planning and follow through, but these efforts are well worth the investment for the well-being of your family.



IDEAS OF FAMILY TRADITIONS

Here are some suggestions of traditions that your family can do:

- **Weekly family night** - whether it's family games, pizza, movie, dance party, or outing, make a point to have some time set aside every week with everyone together, doing something together.
- **Half-birthday celebrations** - we all love birthdays, why not celebrate half birthdays as well! Make a cake and blow out half of the candles, eat breakfast with pancakes ripped in half, sing only the first half of 'Happy Birthday'...make it a full day of half celebrations.
- **Gratitude ABCs** - At a family meal, go through the alphabet and have people share something they are thankful for (i.e., the first person says something that starts with 'A', the second person 'B', etc.). While this is most obvious for Thanksgiving, it is something that can be done at any point throughout the year as well.
- Want more ideas? Then see:
parents.com/fun/activities/fun-family-tradition-ideas
artofmanliness.com/articles/60-family-tradition-ideas

RESOURCES FOR FAMILY TRADITIONS AND CELEBRATIONS

raisingchildren.net.au/grown-ups/family-life/routines-rituals-relationships/family-rituals

ifstudies.org/blog/family-traditions-help-kids-make-sense-of-life

artofmanliness.com/articles/creating-a-positive-family-culture-the-importance-of-establishing-family-traditions

EVIDENCE BASE (SELECTED)

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