

Why Family Traditions Are Important

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July 12, 2018



Traditions and rituals create family cohesion, comfort and security. They often tell a story about our family and they help us to focus our lives around experiences rather than things creating greater lasting happiness. Traditions help teach our children where their family came from or give them insights into their cultural or religious history.

Growing up, we had a family whistle that could be easily heard above the noise of a crowd. Inherited from my mother's family, it was known as the Nyce whistle—my mom's maiden name—and it helped us find each other on many occasions. Although this might not seem like a family tradition, it was something unique to our family.

Many family traditions center around holidays -- special foods, getting and decorating the Christmas tree, setting up the menorah, and eating turkey at grandma's home. Birthday celebrations can include special traditions that make the day special for the birthday child. Traditions can include eating their favorite food together, making time to share heartfelt appreciations about the child over the birthday dessert and measuring them on the growth chart to see how much they have grown. One of my son's birthday tradition was always having a pumpkin pie instead of a traditional cake.

In my family, camping was another family tradition—one that we continued with our own boys. There is something special about sitting around a campfire with no lights except a lantern on the picnic table and the stars overhead. It was magical to discover aspects of nature that we usually rush by in our daily life. It was also a tradition that we took turns cooking meals and cleaning up afterwards in pairs. Another aspect of camping that I loved was the natural opportunity to disconnect from electronics and spend more time talking together or playing board games.

Author, speaker and storyteller Bruce Feiler wrote "6 Things the Happiest Families Have in Common." He was asked what he would recommend as the most important advice he had for families. His answer? "Set aside time to talk about what it means to be a part of your family. Sit down with them and say 'Okay, these are our ten central values.' 'This is the family we want to be. We want to be a family that doesn't fight all the time.' or 'We want to be a family that goes camping or sailing' or whatever it might be. When my family did it, it was literally a transforming experience. We ended up printing it and it hangs now in our dining room." In other words, make a family mission statement—something Steven Covey strongly advocated as a way to strengthen the family through identifying values and traditions.

Family traditions help to create lasting memories that children remember and continue with their own families. What are some of your family traditions? Taco Tuesdays? Taking evening walks after dinner? Favorite bedtime routines? For some inspiration and new ideas, check out "[60+ Family Tradition Ideas](#)" by Brett and Kate McKay.

If you haven't had a chance to check out my website, click on the link above to check out the various services that I offer. Starting on Monday, August 6, I am offering a three-week webinar "[Raising Resilient, Happy, Successful Individuals](#)."