

New traditions, old traditions

Get your family together and make a list of all the family traditions that you have. You may find there are more than you realised because you may not think of them as traditions – things like eating Sunday dinner together or having family games evenings.

Ask each other honestly how much you enjoy each tradition. Be willing to tweak or abandon any that no longer work for you. Traditions aren't always carried on for ever. Some, like the Easter egg hunt you always did for the children, will die out naturally. As things change over the years, new traditions may come about spontaneously, but you can also plan them deliberately – for example, always having pancakes for breakfast on birthdays.

Create lasting memories

If you ask adults what positive memories they have of their childhood, they usually begin with a smile and then say something like: "We used to ..." or "We always ..." Often these memories are not of expensive holidays or presents, but activities like strawberry picking expeditions, board game marathons, or going to the beach in the holidays. Giving our children happy memories like these is a wonderful gift that will last throughout their lives.

Remember that every family is unique, and when it comes to family traditions, anything goes, so do what works for you. And, above all ... have fun!



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Top Tips For Parents

Family Traditions



One of the features of strong families is that they have family traditions. These are customs or rituals that families do over and over again. They will include simple activities like eating fish and chips on a Saturday night or reading a bedtime story to your child.

They also encompass things we do on special occasions – for example, lighting candles on Christmas Eve and watching a favourite film on Christmas Eve, or celebrating birthdays in a particular way. Here are some reasons why family traditions are important.



Belonging and identity

As well as being a place of training, security and safety, an important role of the family is to provide a sense of belonging. Traditions are a part of this, giving everyone in the family the opportunity to interact closely with each other and encouraging a sense of connectedness. A strong bond is formed as you feel part of something unique and special. Family traditions can also help us to find our identity, giving us roots and helping us to understand our place in the world.

Comfort and security

During times of change and grief, family traditions can be an important source of comfort and security. Maybe you've moved house and everything is new and strange for your children, but at least they know that every Tuesday is still pizza night and every Saturday morning they can still count on going for a swim with dad or mum.

Values

Traditions are a great way of passing on our values. Nightly bedtime stories can give children a love of reading and show the value of education, family meals and activities together encourage unity.

Cultural and religious heritage

Many family traditions can be to do with our culture or religious heritage and are often handed down from generation to generation. Continuing them in your own family is one way of passing on your family history to your children, teaching them about events that have shaped your family, and nurturing the connection between the generations.

How traditions come about

Some family traditions come about by chance. Perhaps one day you go for a walk and end up racing sticks in a stream, and after that, every time you pass the stream you do the same thing. It has become a tradition. Other family traditions are 'inherited', with new parents continuing the same traditions with their children that they were brought up with.

You can also deliberately begin new traditions. For stepfamilies in particular, who don't have a shared history, it can be good to work on building new memories and experiences together. This doesn't mean you have to abandon all the old family traditions; it is simply that you add to them with traditions that reflect your new family – for example, when and where you open your presents on Christmas Day.

