

# Family Assets ... Building Blocks for Life



## Fact Sheet



Family Life Month Packet  
Family and Consumer Sciences

# Family Traditions

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The special things we look forward to as a family and the everyday routines we abide by such as the time we get up, the foods we have for breakfast, the things we do on the weekends, and the activities we are involved in during the week are the threads of life that bind us together as a family.

A strong family has a commitment to one another and keeps increasing in strength because of the time they spend together. The way we “do” things becomes our family traditions. You won’t find them written down anywhere, but if you ask one of the family members a question concerning a particular event, they will tell you “we always ...”

There are 3 types of traditions that we need to recognize:

- **Celebration Traditions.** The things we do that are built around special occasions that call for a celebration (holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, etc.)
- **Family Traditions.** The special things that are created within each family to fit their lifestyle (vacations, family council, pizza night, etc.)
- **Patterned Family Interactions.** Those events that are centered around the day to day things in life. (dinner time, bed time, Sunday afternoons, etc.)

One person who studies families remarked, “Families that have the strongest ties have the most traditions or rituals in their life.” These rituals provide a sense of continuity, understanding, and love that strengthens family closeness. These are also opportunities for families to have “good times” and establish good memories to build

upon when times aren’t so good. In a very positive way rituals touch the heart of the family and help members to feel good about themselves and each other. These feelings are carried out through the traditions they participate in.

Why else do we need traditions and rituals? The University of Wyoming shares with us 5 reasons to celebrate family life. By understanding these reasons, we can increase our efforts and realize the importance of daily life within our family.

1. Time to relate or communicate with one another. Caring, problem solving, balancing individual and together time are also part of this time to understand one another’s needs, goals and challenges in life.
2. Help in adapting to new stages of development, crisis or the flow of events. Things like learning a new hobby, caring for a family member, planning a weekly schedule together, learning a new skill like meal preparation or grocery shopping, or establishing a signal to ease transitions like a hand sign to say “you have 5 more minutes.”
3. A time to heal and forgive from a loss or disappointment in life. Using this time to talk about the good times and tell stories. Time to spend together as a sign of cooperation and reconciliation.
4. Time to affirm family values, faith and life experiences. The materials we read to reinforce our faith. The crafts, decorations or special things we do related to holidays or special family events. The time we spend sharing with others outside our family for those in need.

5. A time to celebrate together. The special events in our lives including holidays and special accomplishments by family members.

We can also use these traditions and rituals to connect us to our past. They provide us a base to talk about how things were done and who participated in them years ago. Many of these memories also include the sensory things such as the way something tasted, the way it felt, the special sounds around us or the aromas that enticed us.

There are many reasons that some families may feel disconnected from their nuclear family. For example, moving out of the area, family separation and divorce, early retirement and retirement communities are all factors that cause the family not to be as close as in generations before. Nevertheless, research indicates that the linking of generations is an important part of traditions. Children need to learn about the past, to have cultural identity and to be connected to preceding generations. As we grow older our needs stay the same and so does our desire to share information with those who are younger. By participating in traditions and rituals both generations can have their needs met.

Everyone in the family may not be a “willing participant” at all times. There are cycles of attitude change that youth go through.

- Age 4 “My parents can do anything.”  
 Age 8 “There might be one or two things they don’t know.”  
 Age 12 “Naturally, my parents don’t understand.”  
 Age 14 “I never realized how hopelessly old-fashioned they are!”

Age 21 “You would expect them to feel that way. They’re out-of-date.”

Age 25 “They come up with a good idea now and then.”

Age 30 “I wonder what Mom and Dad think I should do.”

Age 40 “Let’s be patient until we discuss it with our parents.”

Age 50 “What would Mom or Dad have thought about?”

Age 60 “I wish I could talk it over with them one more time.”

As you recognize the traditions and rituals in your families take time to also recognize the strength you gain from them. They make your family unique and provide understanding, continuity, closeness and appreciation for one another. Start today, by realizing the daily things you do that make your family special. Realize that those “little things” done together are really memories in the making.

## References

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