

EASY IDEAS FOR STARTING FUN FAMILY TRADITIONS



Family traditions can offer great opportunities to bond and provide activities that will help keep everyone connected for years to come. We often think of traditions as occurring in conjunction with holidays or other big events but they don't need to be large undertakings. With us all spending more time at home, now is a great time to think about starting a few of your own small family traditions to celebrate and relish the everyday moments of home life.

With routines changed beyond all recognition for many of us, and our worlds restricted to homes and local environments, you may find implementing some familiar daily or weekly traditions will help give rhythm to and shape our home lives. Traditions also help define you as a family, deepen your sense of identity, and forge family bonds. They offer moments to look forward to in our busy, fast-paced world, and create lasting memories by bringing us back to a special time and place over and over again.

Regular rituals also give comfort and security to children. When thinking about which traditions to begin with your family, think about some simple that they can be easily integrated into your life.

If you are not sure where to start, try one of these suggestions.

Grateful For & Looking Forward to...

This is a great way to understand what everyone in your family has enjoyed that day and is looking forward to the next. Learning to reflect on your situation and be grateful for what you have is also an excellent lesson in mindfulness, while thinking about what you are looking forward to provides a mental framework and pattern for looking ahead, not dwelling on the past. These questions also tend to lead to further discussions about the events of the day, pleasures, fears and more.

Bowl of Questions: Starting Conversations at the Dinner Table

To find a time for conversation and connection during busy weeks, create a bowl of questions to keep in your kitchen. Place small pieces of paper and a pen next to the bowl. Every week, have each family member add a few questions. Some may include: *What was your favourite new experience this week and why?* or *Share something today that made you smile.* Pick a regular mealtime when you are most likely to be all together. Have your child randomly select one or two of the questions from the bowl, and over the course of the meal allow each person to share their thoughts.

Reading Stories & Singing Lullabies

Many parents will already be reading stories to their children – it's often one of the first family traditions to evolve and creates a safe warm and relaxing space for children to wind down before bedtime. Try mixing it up with song choices and consider adding in a silly poem book or a longer story or fairy tale book that they can listen to chapter by chapter in addition to their own reading requirements.

Favourite Family Meal or Take Away

Whether it's a Sunday roast, a Saturday night take away, pancakes on a weekend morning or egg night (honestly it can be a thing), these foodie landmarks provide a familiar culinary highlight for everyone in the family to look forward to and bond over.

Cooking Together

Armies may march on their stomachs, but many families also thrive when cooking together. With little children, it's important to start small and achievable – cupcakes, biscuits, scrambled eggs and pancakes all make for easy wins.

Family Game Night: Something for Everyone

Set a time, maybe the first Friday of every month, and begin a family game night – not only will it allow your family special time to connect but will also disconnect everyone from electronics for some quality time together.

For little children this can include fun games like Twister, Connect 4, Uno and jigsaws. As they get older it can evolve to include Monopoly, Bananagrams, The Game of Life and other family board games. Don't forget more creative games such as Pictionary, Scattergories and charades will foster silliness and laughter and lead to these events becoming cherished family moments.

Movie Nights

While children are still small, this may be slightly tortuous with Disney featuring pretty large, but if you begin a tradition of a family movie night at weekends, where family members take it in turns to choose the film, it will help you slowly introduce new films and broaden their horizons as they grow.

Special Family Codes

Who doesn't love a secret! A special family code can really help create a feeling of your family unit – especially if they are non-verbal so can be done when you see your children from afar at a concert or sports game. Visual codes like making a heart sign with your fingers or bumping your chest with your arm, can let children know you love them or are proud of them from a distance and make them feel special simultaneously. A coded sign off for emails or in packed lunches, or just a simple phrase like “I love you to the moon and back” frequently repeated can also make children feel they are secure in the family club.

Duvet Days

Creating a special day every now and again where children can stay in their pyjamas, make dens, watch movies and generally chill out is an important part of family life. It feels decadent as its so unusual and will help you all to bond together as well as relax.

Garden Camping or Den Sleepovers

What is it about not sleeping in your own bed that's so exciting for small children? Whether you have a garden that you can set up camp in, or can make a den indoors, these special nights are great fun and can quickly become traditions for siblings or parent-child bonding. Beware the request for midnight feast though – it may be a good idea to suggest a goodnight feast instead – then at least once they're asleep they won't be tempted to wake.

Whether you begin with one of these ideas, or create your own, predictability and consistency will be the key that transforms a single event into a family tradition. Enjoy finding what is meaningful to your family to instil warm memories for years to come.