

## The comfort and connecting value of rituals

What a year 2020 has been! It will certainly be the year we remember for challenging our health and safety in a way that very few countries throughout the world have experienced before.

COVID-19 saw us sanitising, locking down, working from home, teaching and coaching our children with their learning more than ever before, and the year where few plans came to fruition. Many of us walked the tightrope of responsibility and juggled working from home. For some, work opportunities changed and even disappeared and coping with this has been incredibly difficult. We cared for the kids and/or elderly parents during the height of the pandemic and found strengths we didn't know we had! The challenges on us physically, socially and psychologically have been great. We have learned to be more flexible and the importance of our health has been highlighted in a way none of us could have predicted.

We now look forward to some down time, and Christmas is the perfect time to regroup and create special family time together; to think about and practise the rituals that make your family unique. Whether it's decorating the tree together, making a gingerbread house, enjoying the delights revealed on each day of the advent calendar, attending midnight mass or delivering parcels to the Giving Tree, each family has its own unique way of coming and being together.

Part of the key to a close-knit family is a repertoire of fun rituals. Sometimes these rituals have been part of the extended family for many generations.

Remember to tell your children where the rituals and traditions you follow have come from, and explain why you value them and what special memories they hold for you. This helps your children to create their own family history and special memories, and strengthens their sense of family and belonging; a very powerful panacea when things get tough in life. Most parents can attest to the power of family rituals and their ability to provide comfort to their children, particularly in unfamiliar circumstances. A simple song and a bedtime story can create a great sense of connectedness and belonging, and lets everyone know how important they are to the family. Rituals can help to provide feelings of security and predictability; two things that have been challenged more in 2020 than any other time we can remember.

Here are some links to articles on rituals in family life that you might find interesting. They may even provide inspiration for developing rituals to suit your own family.

- [Family rituals: what are they?](#)
- [41 family rituals that teach responsibility, kindness and compassion](#)
- [How family traditions help form stronger bonds](#)

Summer holidays are also a great time to kick back and have some fun together. With the schedule of school out of the way (and hopefully, a bit of leave from work for you) make the time to be together. Down tools and play. Go for bike rides, picnics, have a day at the beach, a walk on the mountain or bake a cake together. Engage the children in the planning. Set boundaries and budgets as appropriate. You may be amazed with what they come up with. It doesn't have to cost money to have fun. Gift your children with your most precious commodity - your time. We guarantee they will remember this longer than they will the gifts under the tree or the fresh paint in the hallway.

The relaxed time over the holidays may also be a time to better connect with your children and talk with them about values you want to instil. It's a good time to discuss issues relating to friendships that may have been obstacles and celebrate how these were overcome.

A couple of articles we have written previously have covered friendships, and one technique to use when confronting a friend about their behaviour being the use of an 'I' message. 'I' messages simply begin with 'I felt (...) when you (...)' and they safely allow the aggrieved person to communicate with their feelings. This is a great technique to use when parenting too.

We would like to wish you all a very happy and restful Christmas and holiday break, and we look forward to an exciting, healthy and rewarding year to come.

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