Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Creating new family traditions



Although they are meant to be the “most wonderful time of the year”, the holidays can be a stressful time, sometimes made worse by all the pressure and expectation to have fun and for everyone to get along. Often, we feel pressured by family traditions to do things a certain way. This could mean that we are just going through the motions, traditions, and rituals which could feel like chores rather than expressions of joy and energy. Creating new traditions with your family — or even with your friends — can be a powerful way to reclaim a connection to yourself and your loved ones.

As family dynamics change – perhaps there is a divorce, death of a loved one or families are blended into new, beautiful yet challenging constellations. As time passes, old traditions may not seem suitable for you and your family, and/or what values you want to foster in your children.

What is a tradition?

A tradition or ritual is an action or series of actions that you perform more than once, often at a specific time of the day or of the year. Traditions are often associated with religion, as every religion has traditions in some form, as part of its practice. But not all traditions are religious: blowing out candles on a birthday cake, eating turkey on thanksgiving and going to watch fireworks on Fourth of July are all examples of secular traditions.

Why are traditions important?

Traditions have a lot of positive effects on families and social groups. Here are some wonderful benefits of traditions:

- Connect generations and strengthen bonds within a family
- Foster a sense of identity, especially when they are unique
- Provide security, comfort during times of change, upheaval and grief
- Can teach important values
- Create memories
- Add rhythm to the year or week

How to create traditions

Creating traditions is something you can do with your family, so everyone feels connected to the practice itself. Here’s how to get started this holiday season:

- First, identify what you already do that counts as a tradition.
- Then ask, “is this tradition serving me and my family?” “Does it need to change or be replaced with something that suits us better, or do we like it as it is?”
- Then, come up with something new. Perhaps you want to light candles if you didn’t before. Maybe you want to meditate together. Write a song or a poem. Maybe your new tradition is culinary, is there a new food item that is more connected to your family now than what you ate

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growing up? Whatever it is, creating something new with your loved ones is a wonderful bonding activity.

Incorporate traditions year round

While you may start making new traditions this holiday season, consider bringing traditions into all parts of the year, some can be daily, others weekly, and others can only happen once or twice annually. Have fun with it, that’s the best part of creating traditions yourself: you and your family can truly enjoy them!