

Introduction to Family Traditions and Routines

Why focus on families?

Families are necessary. Families are a way we break down large groups into small ones to organize society. Families are important in the emotional and social lives of adults. Families play a major role in the normal growth and development of children.

Four main functions support this important role:

- Families try to provide for the basic needs of the individuals in them including food, shelter, protection from dangers, affection.
- Families create a "home", give people a group to belong to, and a sense of who they are.
- Families help pass traditions and parenting practices between generations.
- Families provide ways for relating to the larger community.

How do families accomplish these functions?

Family rituals, traditions, and routines help families carrying out the functions of the family.



What are family traditions and routines?

Family traditions and routines involve family celebrations such as birthdays and holidays, traditions special to individual families, and everyday routines such as dinnertime.

- Holidays
- Birthdays
- Weddings
- Funerals
- Trips/Vacations
- Picnics/Barbecues
- Sports
- Church
- Reunions
- Family Meetings
- Recreation/Leisure Activities
- Dinnertime
- Bed Time
- Chores
- Family Education

What makes an event a tradition or routine?

- Doing it regularly over time
- Doing it in similar ways each time
- Family members who feel it is important and special

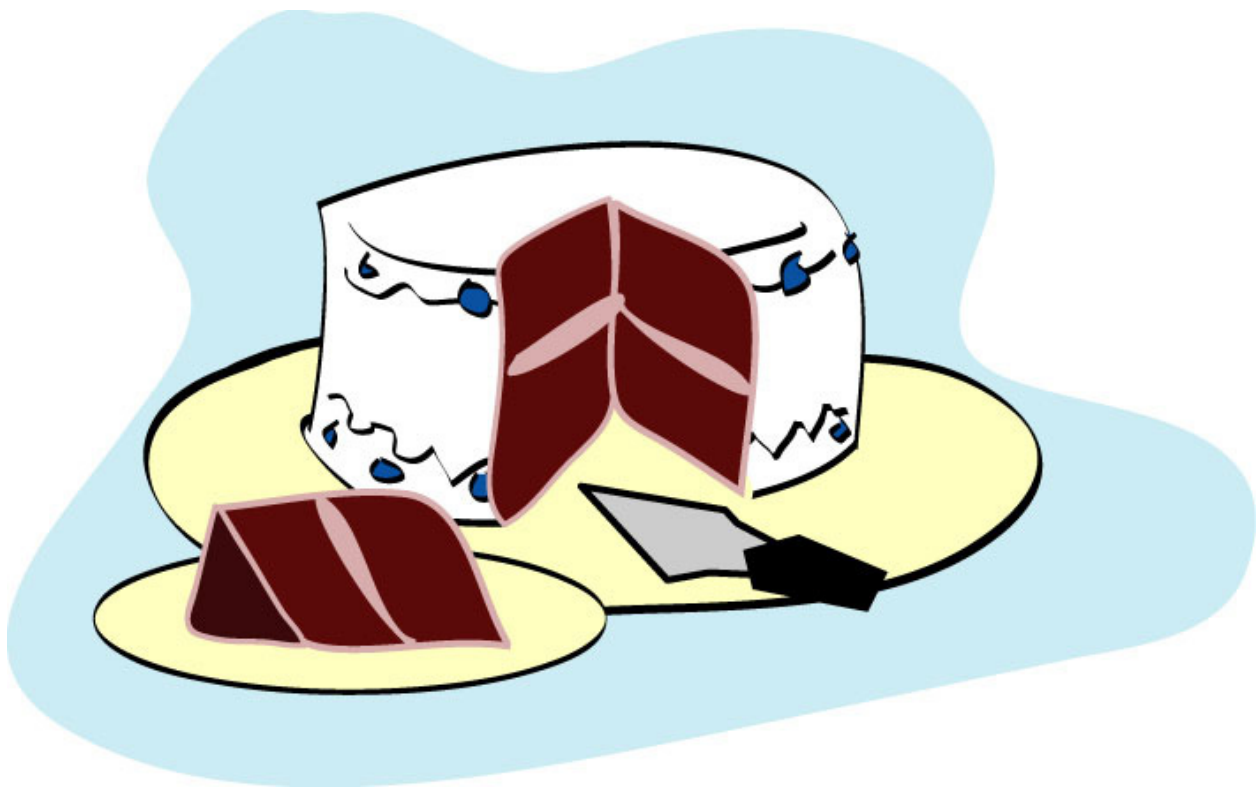
Why are family traditions and routines important?

Family traditions and routines help

- to explain who does what in the family,
- to show who is in and who is outside the family,
- to define rules of day-to-day family life,
- to support the family, and
- to declare who the family is.

What do we know about family traditions and routines?

- All families, no matter what size, age, race, nationality, income level, etc., have traditions and routines.
- Family traditions and routines are often passed down from generation to generation.
- Family traditions and routines almost always change over time.
- Some family traditions and routines disappear altogether.
- Some families make traditions and routines so important that no matter what else happens they continue to carry them out.



How can families strengthen their traditions and routines?

Planning

- ✓ Early planning by parents about what kind of family they want to have, what things they want to do as a family, what is important to their family.
- ✓ Setting high expectations.
- ✓ Trying hard to follow through on these plans.

Tradition Integrity

- ✓ Number of traditions.
- ✓ Richness of traditions.
- ✓ How involved the traditions and routines are.
- ✓ How long the family has been carrying out the traditions.
- ✓ Positive feeling about and meaning of family traditions.

Daily Routines

- ✓ Making a habit of “bigger” routines (that can also become traditions in some families), such as dinner times, by making time for them regularly, no matter what else is happening.
- ✓ Carrying out everyday smaller habits or chores such as observing regular bed times for children, getting children to school, developing leisure time hobbies, and a wide range of likely activities that characterize the day-to-day life of most families with children.

Making It Special

- ✓ Helps the family support their beliefs and values through living them on a daily basis.
- ✓ Helps the family celebrate good things that happen and get through bad things that happen.

Roles

- ✓ Family members know and agree what their part or job is when it comes to carrying out the duties that need to be done in the family on a regular basis or during special occasions. These are family wishes regarding who will do what when. In some families this might mean that one person may be carrying most of the load for these activities while in other families everyone shares the responsibility.
- ✓ Can tell who is in charge.
- ✓ Everyone knows which jobs are shared responsibilities.

Support

- ✓ People outside the immediate family who are often included in the traditions and routines of the family.
- ✓ People outside the immediate family who help when things go wrong.