



Grandparenting

That Was Then: Sharing Family Traditions With Your Grandchildren

Traditions—routines and rituals that we repeat across time and across generations—provide a sense of family connection and family identity. Young children, who already thrive on routines, seem to especially enjoy participating in family traditions. Also, traditions are special times, usually full of love and a sense of closeness and nurturing. Here are some tips to including young children in your family traditions:

- **Share family stories and songs.** Sing a lullaby your mother or father sung to you. Choose stories about when you were a child—games you played, places you visited, funny things your pets did.
- **Remember that it's the journey, not the destination.** For example, you and your grandchild might have a ball baking a special family recipe together, but then your grandchild won't take a bite. The memory of pouring, stirring, and mixing is more important than the tasting.
- **Set your grandchild up for success.** Think about what role your grandchild might have in a particular family ritual. If decorating your home is a holiday tradition, look for child-safe decorations that your grandchild can help you hang.
- **Linger.** One of the most special things about grandparents is that they are often happy to let young children take their time. Think about how good it feels to be with someone who enjoys being with you and doesn't rush you.

Thinking About Traditions

What qualities or values do you believe your family "stands for"? Why?

What family traditions do you remember from your own childhood?

What songs or books do you remember from your childhood?

What family traditions did you establish as a parent?

What family traditions do you want to share with your grandchildren?



A tradition can be a shared project with your grandchild. Toddlers can "help" to paint a birdhouse, plant sunflower seeds in the garden, or even wash the dog.

Starting New Traditions

Remember that it's never too late to begin a new tradition—one that is unique and special to you and your grandchild. Here are some ideas:

- **Enjoy a special mealtime tradition**—blueberry pancakes on Sunday morning or creating a special way to show thanks at the dinner table.
- **Tell a story you've made up especially for your grandchild**—the memory of shared stories can last a lifetime.
- **Look for ways to make an everyday routine memorable**—turn a regular bathtime into a tub full of bubbles or have a winter picnic inside.
- **Embrace technology to create new traditions**—For grandparents who talk to their grandchildren over the Internet, create a ritual for saying hello or good-bye, for example, a special way that you blow a kiss into the webcam.

Authors:
Rebecca Parlakian, M.Ed.
Claire Lerner, LICSW

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