



## Traditions Connect Families

Celebrating family traditions tends to slow us down and help us pay attention to the important aspects of family life. Those traditions are built on customs and practices that strengthen families, create memories, and highlight milestones in life. Take a look at your own customs and those of your neighbors and friends. Most likely you will discover a good deal of diversity in the way traditions are passed down, celebrated, and honored.



### Passing them on

Take a moment to think about the family you grew up in. Did you go on family vacations? Did you bake cookies together? Did you get new clothes for the first day of school? Was the dining room table set with the good china on certain occasions? We tend to pass on traditions that were the most meaningful to us. If your family threw fantastic birthday parties, and those memories are some of your fondest, then a birthday cake with candles, surprises, and games probably await your children.

### Simple ones are still memorable

Traditions need not be expensive or elaborate. Eating popcorn while watching a movie may be a favorite in your family. Maybe you rake leaves together and then jump in the pile. Traditions often feel so natural, we don't even realize we're passing them on—but we feed the ducks at the neighborhood pond or read a bedtime story every night to our children, just like our parents did.

### Celebrating special events

Many families celebrate religious or cultural holidays with specific foods,

clothes, and decorations. These festivities are often celebrated the same way year after year, and they knit families together with common values.

### Evolving and creating anew

Many traditions are changed over time to simplify them or make them more meaningful for a new generation. They get tweaked. New traditions may also be started and then passed down through the family.

### Ideas for new traditions

Celebrate half birthdays—every six months, a mini-celebration rolls around!

Make a new garden stone every year by placing handprints in wet cement.

Plant a tree every year.

Celebrate pet birthdays.

Have everyone stay in their pajamas for a while on the weekend.

Create a family recipe and make it for every special occasion.

### Questions to Contemplate

What family customs do you want to pass down?

How does your culture influence your family traditions?

Have you thrown out a tradition that caused stress?

Have you started a new tradition?



# PERSONAL PARENTING

## Toddler's Creed



*"If I want it, it's mine.*

*If I give it to you, it's mine.*

*If I can take it away from you, it's mine.*

*If it's mine, it will never belong to anyone else, no matter what.*

*If we are building something together, all the pieces are mine.*

*If it looks like mine, it is mine.* Anonymous

## FINE MUSCLE WORKOUT

**Small muscles need practice.**

These two ideas are fun!

\* Press golf tees into a piece of Styrofoam. Provide children with marbles and let them carefully balance the marbles on top.



\* Learning to buckle, snap, button, and zip is a big challenge for little fingers that are still developing. If you have a little one struggling with these skills, try this: Dress a teddy bear or doll in an old pair of baby jeans. It's easier and more fun to dress and undress an old friend.

## TIPS FOR HEALTHY TEETH

1. See a dentist no later than your child's first birthday.
2. As soon as teeth begin to appear, start brushing them twice daily with an age-appropriate toothbrush.
3. Supervise the brushing and flossing of school-age children until they are seven to eight years of age.
4. Use only soft-bristled toothbrushes.
5. Use a smear of toothpaste to brush the teeth of a child under two years of age. For a two- to five-year-old, dispense a pea-size amount of toothpaste and perform or assist your child's toothbrushing.
6. Throw out a toothbrush after three months, or sooner if the bristles are fraying.

*From the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry —www.aapd.org*

## Banana Bonanza



Bananas are a perfect fruit for kids. They're packed with potassium for healthy muscle growth.

### Banana Chips

Slice bananas thinly and place in a single layer on a baking sheet. Brush with 1 tablespoon lemon juice. Bake in a 200-degree oven for 2 hours, or until crispy.

### Banana Parfait

Place a vanilla wafer in the bottom of a small paper cup. Top with layers of crushed vanilla wafers, banana pudding, and sliced bananas.

## Treasured Moments

Don't let today's trivia rob you of today's treasures. So many things come up each day that take our attention, but childhood passes quickly.

Spend a little more time cuddling, singing with your child, or just hanging out coloring or doing a craft together. Children remember these moments.



## Raising a Reader 101

**P**arents are tuned in to the fact that reading is important to all aspects of life.

In *The Read-Aloud Handbook, 7th edition*, author Jim Trelease writes, “There are really only two efficient ways to get words into a person’s brain: either by seeing them or by hearing them. Since it will be years before an infant uses his or her eyes for actual reading, the best source for vocabulary and brain building becomes the ear. What we send into that ear becomes the foundation for the child’s ‘brain house’.”



**Start early.** Even newborns benefit from the sound of your voice and the loving attention they’re receiving when you read to them. Parents delight in introducing beloved characters such as *Winnie the Pooh*, *Peter Rabbit*, and that mischievous monkey, *Curious George*. Research shows that the earlier you start reading to your child, the better. Children who are read to are more likely to become good readers, good learners, and good writers.

**Make reading a part of everyday life.** There’s never a wasted moment when you pass time with a good book. Read whenever you can fit it into your schedule, which may be at the doctor’s office, after school, before naps, or at bedtime. It sounds simple, but reading to your child every day is very important.

**Take your time and read it again.** Children need a little time to look at pictures. They may ask a few questions and want to repeat phrases. You can ask questions, too. “What do you think will happen if the bear crawls into the mitten?” You can also review the story—this is a very helpful activity for learning sequencing skills. And children often want the same book read over and over. They love repetitive phrases and predicting what will happen at the end of the story.

**Liven it up with animation.** It’s easy to read with an accent, a deep voice, or a quiet voice. This type of reading makes the story come alive, and children begin to “see” the characters. You can even read with a few simple props, such as a hat, a wand, or a puppet.

**Improvise and paraphrase.** You don’t have to stick strictly to the text. For young children, simplify the language to make the story more interesting and relevant. You may even substitute your child’s name for the character in the book to make him the star of the story. You can imagine how powerful that is!

**Don’t stop reading aloud.** Reading specialists remind us how important it is to read to older children. Even though they can read on their own, they will benefit from spending time with you, and you can read books with more complex themes.