

TRADITION!

creating *Holiday Memories* in 2010 (and Beyond)

By Rachel Whitaker

The holidays are already packed with tradition, but that doesn't mean your family can't benefit from a new one this year. Creating a tailor-made activity to match the unique dynamics of your family is easy and can provide lasting memories for years to come. Here are a few ideas to get you started.

Have a Purpose in Mind

Take a few minutes to determine what you'd like to accomplish with your new tradition. It can be as simple as developing stronger relationships with loved ones or adding extra fun to a family party. It can also be a tool to help teach a lesson, introduce a new experience, or serve others. As you brainstorm, consider the traditions you already have in your family—watching for needs that haven't yet been met.

Consider Ages, Interests,

Personalities, and Abilities

Once you've got a general purpose in mind, make a list of the people who will be involved in your tradition, taking note of ages, interests, personalities, and abilities as you go. The more you consider the needs of your group, the more meaningful your tradition will be for everyone involved. For instance, young children may need an activity that accommodates their short attention spans and limited mobility. Teenagers may benefit from a light-hearted activity or an opportunity to get better acquainted with other teenagers. Adults with tight budgets may also appreciate something that requires little or no money to attend.

Get Feedback

Some traditions work well with little advanced notice, while others require more planning and support from the group to be successful. As you explore the possibilities of a new

tradition, consider involving family members in the process. What kinds of activities would they be interested in doing? What have they seen friends and ward members do in the past? Do they have any needs, ideas, or concerns that you haven't yet considered? Be sure to add any feedback they provide to your list.

Focus on Teamwork

Although it may be beneficial to have a ringleader for your tradition, by no means should one person be required to shoulder the load alone. In reality, the most enjoyable traditions are those that are planned and executed by all involved. If it's a dinner you are planning, create meal assignments for each adult and encourage everyone to help clean up afterward. Make it clear that your fun activity is a team activity and can only work with everyone's help. Then be an example in delegating tasks to others and happily taking assignments when they are given.



Holiday Tradition ideas

FOR CHILDREN

- Have a Christmas story time
- Prepare a holiday craft and display the finished artwork
- Write letters and make cookies for Santa

FOR TEENS

- Plan a holiday movie and pizza party just for teens
- Do a Christmas scavenger hunt (around the house or in the neighborhood)
- Help plan and carry out a service project

FOR ADULTS

- Attend a play or concert
- Shop together for children's gifts
- Do a holiday recipe exchange

FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

- Hold your own family Christmas sing-a-long or concert (make use of chimes, bells, or drums)
- Have a talent show (be flexible on your definition of "talent")
- Decrease the limit for family Christmas gifts and give the difference to a charity
- Have a gratitude sharing session
- Share a holiday game or word puzzle (there are lots online)

Be Consistent

True traditions are typically repeated, whether on a weekly, monthly, or yearly basis. Although this repetition can get tedious at times, it also lends a certain amount of stability to the group. When family members know your tradition will happen no matter what, they will make more of an effort to attend without a fuss. Over time, everyone will come to expect the tradition and even look forward to it. In order to make your tradition a reality, get it on the calendar as soon as possible—even months in advance—and encourage others to do the same. Then, as the tradition nears, remind everyone about it often and with enthusiasm.

Be Camera Ready

One of the biggest purposes of tradition is to create lasting memories, so whenever possible, take a camera along with you and spend a few moments regularly capturing the event. Afterward, consider displaying the photos in your home and watching out for opportunities to talk about favorite memories of the tradition. Even these discussions can bring your family closer together and create additional anticipation for next year's event.

Enjoy the Moment

Traditions don't have to be perfectly executed to be effective. In fact, a little disorder can be a good thing since it helps everyone feel more comfortable and free to have a good time. Planning is always a great start to a new tradition, but once the planning is over and everyone is gathered, make a point to relax and let things happen naturally.

Leave Room for Adjustments

The traditions you enjoyed in your family growing up might not work with the dynamics of your family now. Likewise, the traditions you started when the kids were toddlers may not work when they are teenagers. If you have traditions that fall into this category, take a good look at them and decide if they're worth keeping. If anything, you can tweak them to fit the needs of your family as it grows and matures.

What tradition will you begin this year? The possibilities are truly endless, and the benefits are unfathomable. All it takes is a few minutes of your time, and you'll be on your way to creating stronger ties with loved ones and incredible memories to last a lifetime.



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