

# TODAY'S FUTURE

## Upcoming Events:

December 5, 2011  
Parents Forever Class  
3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.  
Norfolk, Nebraska

## Holiday Traditions Are More Important Than You Realize

Creating and maintaining holiday traditions are far more important to children than most parents realize. Family traditions provide enjoyment that extends far beyond the moment for those who participate; family traditions help define a family.

Activities that are observed and performed by the family year in and year out (holidays, birthdays, annual fishing trips, etc.) help build trust, security and stability. Regardless of what else may happen throughout the year, these traditions will not change.

Traditions also provide us with a sense of identity. They are among the things that make us unique from other families. For example, most families that celebrate Christmas will decorate a tree, hang stockings and fix a large meal. Similarly, Jewish families light Menorah candles during the Hanukkah celebration, also followed by a large meal. However, there are probably nuances to your celebrations...maybe your family opens presents on Christmas Eve, or one of your Hanukkah meals features a particular recipe from a great aunt that is unique to your family; or perhaps you have a blended family and you celebrate Christmas and Kwanza. Every family provides a unique twist on the holidays with ethnic foods, decorations, and special activities – these all help families become distinctive.

Another reason that traditions are so vital is that they provide continuity between generations. When families come together at the holidays, it's a wonderful opportunity to have the older family members tell stories about what Christmas was like when they were young. Placing ornaments on the tree that have survived a few generations and using well-loved family recipes are great ways to link past generations with the newer members of the family.

Allison Woods, speaker and writer, recommends the following tips to figure out what holiday traditions will work best for you:

**Realize that some traditions just happen.** Whether it's building a Graham Cracker Cookie Mansion or decorating a special tree—sometimes the best traditions just magically start.

**Traditions should include everyone.** Even if there is one 'boy' tradition with dad and a 'girl' tradition with mom, most traditions should include everyone in the family (this includes grandparents and extended family if they are staying in the house at the time).

**Choose activities that reflect the spirit of the holiday.** Whichever faith you may follow, find the time to attend at least one service during the season.

**Choose activities that will serve others.** The holidays are a great time to practice and teach generosity to your children. Allow your children to help select what they want to participate in each holiday season so they can develop a clear understanding of the needs of the community.

**Choose activities that are easily reproduced year after year.** The importance of the holidays is not to be elaborate but to be repeated every year and passed on to the next generation.

Family traditions need to be emphasized and kept faithfully. If a child or teenager in your household wants to go to a party rather than attend a traditional family dinner, consider saying "No." However, it is important that you discuss your reasons for keeping the family customs; don't lose your temper, just explain your reason. Similarly, if a holiday party at work lands on the same day that you have planned to go get your family tree, again, put the family custom first. As soon as exceptions are made, the tradition dies out and the family has lost what could have been a great moment. Years from now you will see your children starting the same traditions in their families.

Source: [www.twoofus.org](http://www.twoofus.org)