

Creating Family Traditions

*"Sometimes the most ordinary things could be made extraordinary, simply by doing them with the right people"-
Nicholas Sparks*

Imagine eating at your grandma's dinner table at your family's holiday celebration. Among the tablecloth decorations is your hand print from when you and your cousins were 3 years old. How special is that?



The holiday season is upon us and precious family moments, memories and traditions will be experienced and embraced! Every family has its own unique way of marking the holiday season and traditions often play a big role in celebrations – and are also a great way to [bond as a family](#). How can you create memories and maybe even start a new tradition with your family this year? Here are a few ideas.

- **Write an annual letter to your child.** This letter (or multiple letters from grandparents, aunts, uncles) can be filled with observations as well as hopes for the child's future. The holidays are an equally appropriate time to mark your child's growth with a special message that will be cherished for a lifetime. Sealing letters and storing them in a keepsake box until they're old enough to read and enjoy them is an option.
- **Do a gift exchange for charity.** Turn the tables this year if you draw names to determine who's buying for whom. Instead of buying a present, make a donation or spend time volunteering for a charity of the giftee's choice. [Provide context for your children](#) with age-appropriate messages about why helping others is important. For example, if one of the "gifts" is making hats for babies, you can explain to your child that babies are born every day who don't have access to a warm hat or other simple things that can give them a healthy start in life.
- **Hang special annual ornaments on the tree.** If you like, buy or make a special ornament each year for each child. When they grow up, they will each have a set of ornaments to decorate their own Christmas trees – and will also have all of the memories those ornaments hold.
- **Communicate and compromise.** There are a lot of choices available during the holidays around events and activities. Because it's impossible to do everything, talk about what family members would like to do and create a tentative plan that includes something each member of your family wants to do. Good communication and compromise is especially important for [blended families and two-household families](#). It's important for the adults in these families to all be on the same page about all holiday plans and gifts to make sure kids don't have to worry about the details. In addition, be sensitive to traditions each child may want to carry over from his or her biological family.

The holidays can be a stressful, hectic, busy time. It's important to take a step back in the midst of all that busyness and look for opportunities to reconnect as a family. This can be done by honoring family traditions and most especially by creating new ones! Have a wonderful holiday season.