



Building Blocks II

A newsletter for Acushnet, Berkley, Dartmouth, Dighton, Fairhaven, Freetown, Lakeville, New Bedford, Rehoboth, Seekonk, and Swansea families with children birth-age 8.

Family Traditions



Traditions are behaviors and actions that you engage in again and again - performed at the same time and/or in the same way. Traditions can be big or small, but they differ from routines and habits in that they are done with a specific purpose in mind and require thought and intentionality. Traditions, when done right, lend a certain magic, spirit, and texture to our everyday lives.

Besides the typical family traditions that come with the holidays or birthdays, your family can have daily connection traditions (a secret handshake, family

meal, family prayer, bedtime stories, or evening walks), weekly connection traditions (a special Saturday morning breakfast, weekly family game night, movie night, pizza night, or weekly family meeting), or life changes traditions (traditions to celebrate big life changes or milestones - a yearly First Day of School picture or dedicating a new home). You can also create family traditions that happen on a monthly basis or

seasonally.



Make family game night a new family tradition.

Studies show that traditions strengthen family bonds, enrich the life you share together, contribute to your children's well-being, and create lasting memories. Choose traditions that most resonate

with you and your children. Commit to them and do your best to be as consistent as possible.

Source: artofmanliness.com

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The Happiness Jar

Here is a tradition that you can start this New Year: write down something that made you happy every day, then open the jar and read about all the amazing things that happened. You can open it the following New

Year, or pop it open whenever life gets a bit tough.

This is YOUR jar, so you make the rules. All you need is a large jar and some paper. At the end of the day, you can reflect on your day in solitude, or during family

dinner, make it a tradition to talk with your children about their best moments from the day.

- You could include:
- Your happiest moment that day
- Something you are

grateful for

- A lucky token, ticket stub, or a note from a loved one

Whatever it is, write it down, put a date on it, and toss it in the jar.

Source: www.mommypotamus.com

Busy Boxes

Whether you are going on a long car ride, eating out at a restaurant, or just need something to keep your child busy at home, these boxes are the perfect thing to have at hand. Busy boxes are boxes filled with materials and activities to encourage independent play. There is no limit to what you can do with them.

The key for the busy box is knowing your child. While one child may devote hours to a busy box filled with stickers, another may toss it aside

after only a few minutes.

You can fill them with:

- ◆ playdough
- ◆ family photos
- ◆ crayons and paper
- ◆ pipe cleaners and straws or beads
- ◆ beans and construction vehicles



Sort pompoms into colored paper muffin cups.

Store them in plastic bins, baskets, or even Ziploc bags, and pull them out as needed. Visit pinterest.com for so many more great ideas!

Source: www.thegoodmama.org

Building Indoor Forts

Building forts or hideouts with blankets and pillows, using household items like sofas, tables, and chairs, is a wonderful tradition of childhood. As children build them, they develop creativity, learn spatial awareness, and practice the laws of physics.

Forts can be small - a sheet or blanket thrown over a table - or so big that they are almost room size. They can hold one child or a whole family.

Make signs for your fort. Does it have a name? Who can go inside? What are the rules?

Choose a theme for your fort. It can become an igloo, a castle, a house, a grocery store, a bear's cave, or a teepee. Add props and costumes. Read books about the theme.

Give your children flashlights to light up inside the fort, enjoy a picnic in the fort, or bring in sleeping bags and

have a sleepover.

"Building forts or hideouts with blankets and pillows is a wonderful tradition of childhood."

Source: www.truceteachers.org

Tips for Toy Safety

- Avoid choking hazards. Do not buy small toys or toys with small parts for children under 3, or any child who still puts things in her mouth.



Avoid toxic chemicals and lead paint.

- Read and heed warning labels.

- Never give young children small balls or balloons.
- Keep magnetic toys away from children under six.
- Children's ears are sensitive. To protect children from loud toys: if it seems too loud for

your ears, it is probably too loud for a child.

- Avoid strangulation hazards. Remove knobs or beads from cords longer than 1 foot.
- Avoid toxic chemicals. Choose unpainted wooden or cloth toys.

Source: www.toysafety.net

Infant Activities

Unwrap the Fun: Create your own wrapping paper party by using old newspaper or recycled wrapping paper to wrap up familiar objects from around the house - such as your baby's bowl, rattle, stuffed animal, or a set of keys. See how long it takes baby to figure out how to get to the object. Allow him to explore the crinkly paper as long as he chooses.

Imitation Games: If you stick your tongue out at your baby, does she stick her tongue back? If so, this

game might be the perfect activity for her. Try making funny faces, such as opening your mouth very wide, blowing up your cheeks, or blinking very quickly. If your baby imitates your motions, applaud her actions.

Water play: Babies love playing with water. Make bath time a learn-



If your baby imitates your motions, applaud her actions.

ing experience by providing items such as cups and sponges.

Source: brighthubeducation.com and www.naeyc.com

Toddler Activities

Cotton Ball Toss: Set a large container on the floor. Have your toddler stand three or four feet away from the container. Encourage him to toss the cotton balls into the container. Together count how many he made in.

Snow Castles: Take plastic buckets and containers of various sizes outside in the snow. Show your child how to pack snow into the buckets, turn them upside down on the ground, and

lift them up to leave mounds of snow. You can spray the containers with nonstick cooking spray to prevent the snow from sticking.

Hand Talk: Show your child how to talk with her hands. Let her wave hello and goodbye or use her hands to ask someone to stop or be quiet. Show her the "ok" sign. Ask her to think of other things she can say with her hands.



Source: Toddler Games

Preschool/School-Age Activities

Fine Motor Work Station: On a piece of construction paper draw swirls, various shapes, zigzags, numbers, or letters. Provide different colored buttons, gemstones, pebbles, etc. Encourage your child to trace the pattern with the object chosen.

Exploring Mixing: Using blue, yellow, and red food coloring, make colored ice cubes. Fill the ice cube tray with water and add a drop of food coloring

to each cube. You can do five of each primary color, so you have 15 total. Once frozen, place the cubes in three bowls in front of your child. Also place out seven glasses of warm water. Encourage your child to place the ice cubes into the glasses one at a time, making different combi-



A Fine Motor Work Station is easy to make.

nations of the colored cubes. See if your child can predict what color the cubes will make.

Source: www.learning4kids.net



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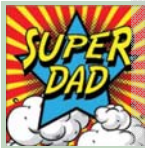


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Fire Safety Tips

- * At first sign of fire, get out of the building. Stay out and don't go back in for any reason.
- * Call 9-1-1 from a neighbor's house. Go to your designated family meeting place.
- * Have smoke alarms installed on every floor and check the batteries regularly.
- * Practice fire drills in the home and be sure to know 2 ways out.
- * If your clothing catches on fire, stop, drop, and roll.
- * In a smoke-filled room, stay low and crawl below the smoke.
- * In the kitchen, watch what you heat. Keep a fire extinguisher handy. Put a lid on grease fires, never water.

Source: Fire Department Pamphlet



How to be your
 kid's hero
 without
 the cape

How to Get the Most Out of Family Meal Times

Family dinners can contribute to your child's overall wellbeing. They offer a chance for your child to slow down, get together face-to-face, talk without distractions, cement your values, create a feeling of support, and build loving bonds.

1. Make family dinner a ritual. Schedule your work and activities around this immovable block.
2. It's just as beneficial to sit down together for other meals — breakfast, lunch, even dessert! The key is that you're together as a family on a regular basis.
3. Get your kids involved with making the meal. This will give them a better appreciation of food and teach them a

valuable skill in self-reliance.

4. Make it an ironclad rule: no electronic devices at the table.
5. Some quiet background music adds to the atmosphere and makes the occasion feel a little more special and fun.
6. Saying grace before a meal teaches your kids the importance of gratitude and what a blessing it is to have food on their plates.
7. Dinner is a great time to teach manners, which will help your kids cul-



Meal time is a good time to talk about your family history.

tivate a civil and polite mindset.

8. Talk about your family history. Children who know about their family's history have a stronger sense of control over their lives, higher self-esteem, and feel more connected to their families.

Source:
www.artofmanliness.com