

Pass the Chocolates, Please

Holiday traditions. Those little rituals passed down from generation to generation that help shape our holidays in our families and create a sense of unity, warmth and closeness are so important. Their main goal is to create memories that fill our minds and hearts with peace, love, happiness, and security.

Some traditions are decades old and have been passed down through the years. As a seven-year-old, I sat at the Starlight theatre in Kansas City and listened intently as the Russian character Tevye sang the song, *Traditions* during the *Fiddler on the Roof* musical. I was captivated as the song described traditions as the basis for balance, and the way everyone knew how to dress, work and act because of traditions.

The traditions Tevye sang about were cultural and had been passed down for generations. However, I want you to consider traditions on a smaller, less cultural or societal scale. Consider traditions within your family, both immediate and extended family.

What traditions did you have as you were raised? If you are married with children, what traditions did your spouse bring? What traditions have you started with your children or grandchildren?

I called my daughter this week to remind her to bring a small box of Godiva chocolates to Christmas. My Mother was a chocoholic and her favorites were dark Godiva chocolates. Mother always supplied the box of Godivas on Christmas. After all the presents were opened, she would reach under her chair to get the coveted box. She would carefully take the gold ribbon off the gold foil box and pass it around the room.

The chocolates provided the closure, the peace of being together as a family. That tradition remains in our family though my Mother isn't here to enjoy the chocolate treats. It's still a peaceful moment as we celebrate our family and remember her fondly.

Some traditions may be getting in the way of common sense and modern ways. Such as, the entire family going to grandma's and grandma cooking all the food. You know the saying, "many hands make light work." This really applies during the frenzy of the holidays. Let grandma provide the meat while everyone else contributes traditional dishes. Even if grandma puts up a fuss the first year, she may realize the freedom of having others bring food.

Letting go or changing traditions happens for a variety of reasons. Divorce, death, geographic distance, economic times, and clashing personalities can all play into reasons traditions change or end. Change is hard. Try to focus on the reason behind the tradition and perhaps there is something to replace the ritual that is ending. For instance, if everyone used to be together on Christmas day for the evening dinner and now everyone lives across the world, ask the most "techie" family member to organize a conference call or video-call on the Internet during dinner.

As you celebrate this season, consider what is working well and what isn't. If you are a family with young children or grandchildren, think about new traditions you want to begin. Remember, traditions don't have to be extravagant or require a lot of planning. But, they are very important to families. Traditions are like the glue that holds a family together. They are what make families unique.

We all have very busy lifestyles, and adding a small tradition here or there can make all the difference to your family. I'll share more about family traditions throughout the year in January. Until then, enjoy your holiday traditions.