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CONNECT AT HOME AND AT SCHOOL

# How family rituals can help teens connect at home and at school

Family rituals can help teens feel safe and secure, helping them to connect more at home and school.



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Remember your favourite childhood memories? They might involve your family getting takeaway every Friday night or an annual family camping trip during the summer holidays. Chances are many of your favourite memories are family rituals. Family rituals provide shared memories, create connections, and strengthen bonds. And rituals can help teens feel safe and secure, alleviate their anxiety, and encourage them to connect more at home and at school.

## It's backed up by science

A 2017 study of 224 young people aged 12 to 15, found that the practice of family rituals and traditions had a significant role to play in increasing social connectedness for teens. The research also found that family and school connectedness were associated with increased levels of emotional and behavioural development in teens.

## There's lots of upsides

Connecting with your teen through ritual can provide them with stability, positivity, consistency and a routine. These experiences can also help them understand who they are and what they value.

## Ten ideas for your family's rituals

Rituals don't have to be expensive or complicated. Some of the most fun activities are free! It's about building a connection and having a conversation. Here's ten ideas to get you started:

1. board game afternoon
2. weekly family meal where each person shares their 'top 3' highlights for the week
3. making dinner together
4. annual fishing trip
5. volunteering together at a local charity, animal shelter, nursing home or community group a few times a year

6. Sunday night roast night
7. family movie night
8. a special handshake
9. home-cooked breakfast to celebrate the last day of each school term
10. music sharing night, with every family member picking a song they love that they don't think the others have heard
11. a picnic in the park with the families of other school friends in the week before Term 1 begins.

## How sensory repetition can deepen the power of ritual

Research has found that repetition helps children develop emotional security and strengthen connections leading to a sense of safety. In older children and teens, routines bring structure and predictability that helps them navigate the complicated world around them. Using sensory repetition as part of your family's rituals can help your child feel safe. Find ways to build repetition into your chosen ritual to help stimulate all your child's senses: have the same music playing, have the same oils burning or the same smell of biscuits baking, or use a special tablecloth. Think about what your child sees, smells and hears, and find ways to build that into your ritual.

## It's a win-win

The connectedness that comes with family rituals can strengthen your bond with your teen *and* equip them to cope better at school. And while your teen might whinge about participating in a family ritual today, don't be surprised if that very same ritual becomes one of their happiest childhood memories long after they've left their teen years behind.

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