



How family traditions can help teens connect at home and at school

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



Key points

- When families spend time together creating traditions, it can help teens feel safe and secure.
- Spending time together doesn't have to cost anything and can be as simple as playing cards or sharing stories.
- The feeling of connection that comes with spending time with family can strengthen your bond with your teen and equip them to cope better with school.

Remember your favourite childhood memories? They might involve story-telling, singing or playing music with your family, or an annual camping trip during the summer holidays. Chances are many of your favourite memories come from those times your family did something together. Such occasions provide shared memories, create connections, and strengthen bonds. And when families do things together and create traditions, it 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 research

A 2017 study of 224 young people aged 12 to 15, found that family and school connectedness were associated with increased levels of emotional and behavioural development in teens. Research has also found that traditional Aboriginal cultural practices that involve extended family and the wider community and promote connection in the raising of children can have positive effects on children and communities.

There's lots of upsides

Connecting with your teen through regularly doing things together as a family can provide them with stability, positivity, consistency and a routine. These experiences can also help your teen understand who they are and what they value.

Ideas for things your family can do together

Spending time with your family and building family traditions does not 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 some ideas to get you started:

1. playing sports outside together
2. having a board or card game afternoon
3. enjoying a weekly family meal where each person shares their 'top 3' highlights for the week
4. singing and playing music together
5. sharing story-time through reading books, yarning or acting out stories
6. going on an annual fishing trip
7. doing family skits or a karaoke show together
8. volunteering together at a local charity, animal shelter, nursing home or community group a few times a year
9. eating a Sunday night roast night together
10. watching favourite show together or having a family movie night
11. using a special handshake
12. making a home-cooked breakfast to celebrate the last day of each school term
13. having a family dance night
14. attending significant events together such as NAIDOC week or an arts festival
15. having a picnic in the park with the families of other school friends in the week before the school year starts.

It's a win-win

The feeling of connection that comes with spending time with family can strengthen your bond with your teen *and* equip them to cope better at school. And while your teen might whinge about participating in family time today, don't be surprised if those very same experiences and traditions become some of their happiest childhood memories long after they've left their teen years behind.

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