

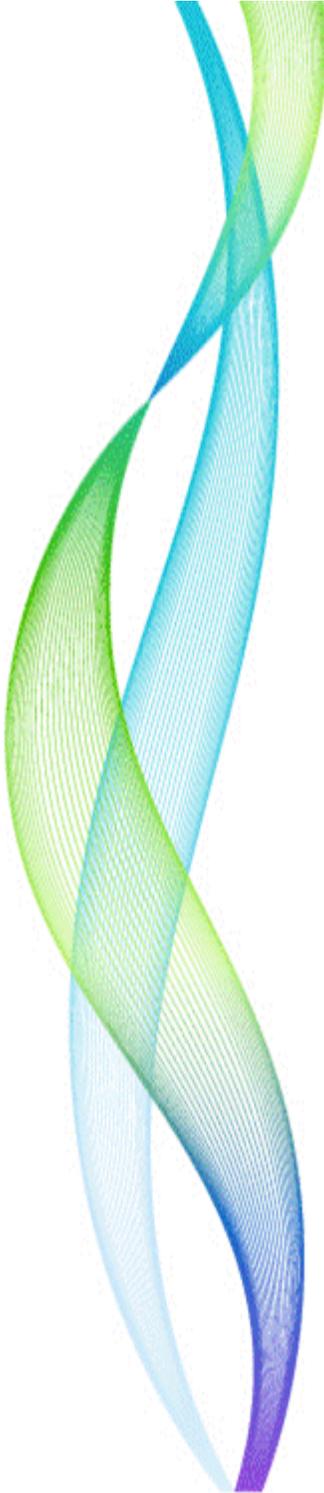
December 2016

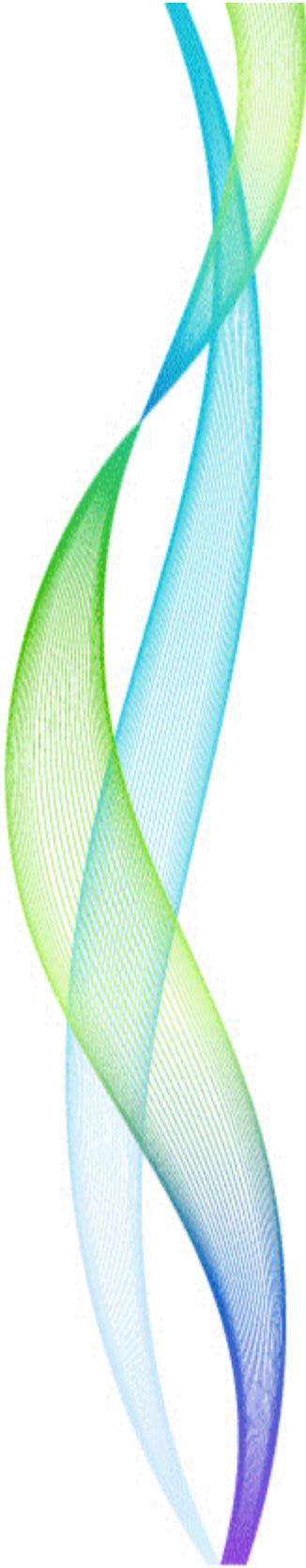
**Focus:** The Importance of Family Traditions

- It's Saturday morning. Fourteen-year-old Michael and his father wake up early, before the rest of the family, to make pancakes together. They've done this—just the two of them—almost every Saturday since Michael was seven. It's also the time when Michael feels the most comfortable in letting his dad know what's going on at school, and with friends.
- After enjoying an intimate Thanksgiving dinner, Joe and Lisa always rent a movie and open a bottle of their favorite wine, curling up in front of the fireplace and relaxing. Sometimes, they end up mostly talking or laughing but each of them looks forward to that time together.
- On Sunday afternoons, the Smith family gathers in their living room and turns off all electronics for one hour, talking instead or playing a board game. The kids, now teenagers, often moan and groan about having to ignore their smart devices for “a whole hour”, but they also now happily tell their friends that they can't make outside plans that afternoon because it's reserved for family time.

These are just a few examples of how couples and families can weave traditions into daily living. And while some people are more naturally drawn than others to repetition, routine and tradition, it's important to understand that family traditions are a good idea for everyone; they play an integral role in defining who we are as well as help in determining who and what we can be.

Traditions have been described as “stories, beliefs, rituals and customs that are passed from one generation to the next. Keeping traditions for the holidays as well as the ordinary days help teach children the things their family values. ...This will give them a feeling of pride and belonging to actually be a part of the traditions.” (source: Amy Griswold,





Univ. of Illinois). Traditions may also be based on culture (such as making and serving a particular food), religion or spirituality.

Noted Houston-based psychologist and author Susan Lieberman defines family traditions in this way: “Family traditions counter alienation and confusion...they provide something steady, reliable and safe in a confusing world.” In our current political and socio-economic climate—one flooded with technology, social media and 24/7-news programming—many people are seeking out these very things.

Though family traditions are not limited to the holidays, they’re certainly an excellent time to implement them. Explain existing traditions to new and younger family members, and involve your partner or family in coming up with ideas for new traditions. Whether big or small, once-a-year or once-a-week, traditions help keep family time special.

*Happy Holidays from Insights!*

**Reconnect:** Buy Something Silly

How many times do we see something silly in a store, or online, and think, “My partner would love that”? Then, we talk ourselves out of buying it because we think it’s *too* silly. Unfortunately, we miss a golden opportunity to experience both spontaneity and playfulness. So, the next time you spot an item that would bring a smile to your loved one’s face, go ahead and buy it, already! ☺

**Bibliotherapy:** *New Traditions* and *Americans Speak*

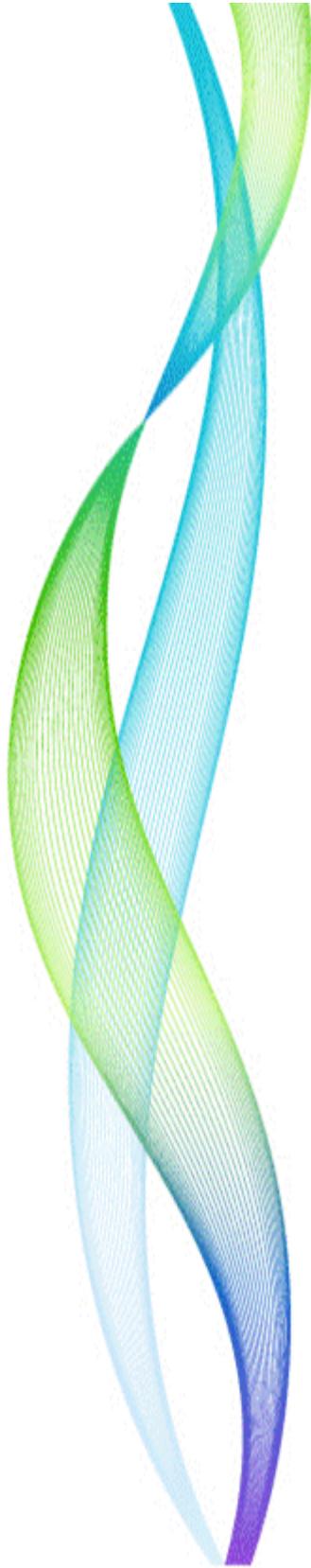
This month, we’re featuring two books from Susan Lieberman:

*New Traditions: Redefining Celebrations for Today’s Family*

Lieberman shows how, when old tradition fail[s], families can invent or adopt new one. *New Traditions* is most useful for families, but it will inspire anyone who feels the urge to celebrate special occasions and everyday life. (source: [www.susanlieberman.com](http://www.susanlieberman.com))

*Americans Speak: One Thing I Would Do For Our Country Is...*

In this intriguing politically neutral book, readers meet 65 diverse Americans. They respond to the prompt: If I were in charge, one thing I would do for our country is...Each reply is accompanied by



a photo and bio. Forty-eight high-school students also weigh in with their thoughts. These responses underscore that there are not easy answers to our difficult, complex challenges, but there is a deep yearning for us to Do Better, Be Better, Get Better. The choices the respondents make often come from the personal circumstances of their lives. (source: [www.susanlieberman.com](http://www.susanlieberman.com))

### **Time-Out:** Electronic Gift Giving for Kids

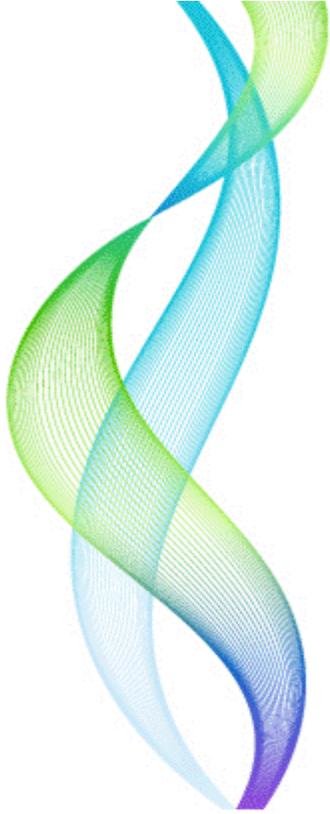
As parents, we're often telling our children to take a break from screen time, yet when it comes to gift giving, we're the (guilty) ones who buy them electronic devices! On the positive side, there *are* some excellent apps, websites and programs that make learning fun for kids. On the not-so-positive, it's more screen time and kids haven't done anything to earn those coveted and often expensive items. How about this year, giving your kids—of all ages—some good old-fashioned books? Stay away from titles like “Physics Can Be a Blast!” because, let's be honest—it's not, really. Search for age-appropriate parent and kid picks on sites like Amazon. Best of all from a modern child's perspective, once books have been read cover to cover, they can easily be sold at places like Half Price Books. Perhaps they can even save up the money...to buy more books (or their own electronics)!

### **Self Care Strategies:** Out With the Old...

The end of the year is the perfect time to clean out computer hard drives, closets, kitchen drawers, car trunks and all of those other places where we manage to store things we no longer need. Many charities these days will happily pick up your used items from your front porch. Why not schedule a quiet afternoon to prepare your home, office and mind for the New Year?

### **Take Two:** *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*

Academy Award winning director Ang Lee's extraordinary vision brings the widely-acclaimed, bestselling novel to life in *Billy Lynn's Long Halftime Walk*, told through the eyes of 19-year-old army private Billy Lynn (newcomer Joe Alwyn). Lynn and his fellow soldiers come home for a victory tour, culminating in a spectacular Thanksgiving Day football halftime show. Through flashbacks, the film reveals what really happened to the squad – contrasting the realities of the war with America's perceptions. (source: [www.angelikafilmcenter.com](http://www.angelikafilmcenter.com)) Written by Dallas author Ben Fountain, a winner of the National Book



Critics Circle Award for Fiction and a finalist for the National Book Award.

**Our Time is Up:** Stayed tuned for our next issue with a new look and format!