

Think Tank December 2014

Focus: The Importance of Holiday Traditions



Holiday traditions are designed to be intentional, joyful traditions that link us to our past and a meaningful way to celebrate life's small moments. Whether they include making cookies with your kids, watching *It's A Wonderful Life* for the twenty-seventh time with your spouse or shopping and teatime with your mom— these are the memories that we will treasure.

But holiday traditions are not exclusive to large families or religions. And they certainly don't have to be "grand". In fact, many holiday traditions are things that we do in a quiet way, alone, consciously or not. Perhaps we look forward to the warmth of a roaring fire and a good book on the first snowy night of the year. Or, we wrap presents in a certain way because that's the way our grandmother taught us. Or we order Chinese takeout and light candles instead of cooking a big, exhausting holiday meal.

While large family gatherings can be fun and festive, they can also be challenging. Perhaps Ram Dass said it best: "If you think you're enlightened; go home for Thanksgiving." Or Hanukah. Or Christmas. Or July Fourth. The point is, we tend to idealize the holidays but in truth, those of us lucky enough to have family sometimes struggle with their dysfunction and those without family (or family close by) struggle with holiday loneliness.

So, what can you do? You can't change your family but you can change your traditions. As an adult, you're now in charge of what's important to you so keep the traditions you love and let go of those that no longer work for you. For example, traditions that are stressful (such as traveling out of state) can be reconsidered or at least rescheduled for a less hectic time of the year. Blend your favorite traditions with those of your partner. Create new traditions, alone and together.

We wish you a happy, healthy and meaningful holiday season.

Reconnect: Love Languages, Revisited

In his 1995 book entitled, *The Five Love Languages*, relationship counselor and author Gary Chapman explained how couples can better communicate with each other and ultimately, both give and receive more love. Chapman defines those languages as:

Gifts
Quality time
Words of affirmation

Acts of service
Physical touch

This holiday season, spend a few moments thinking about the way(s) your partner shows his or her love to you. Then, instead of giving them a gift that *you* would like, give them what *they* would. Is he a man of few words but always brings you coffee? He might appreciate a gift certificate for his favorite home-cooked meal. Does she pat you on the arm every time she walks by, or never leaves the house without kissing you? Buy her a massage at her favorite spa. You get the idea!

Bibliotherapy: *Christmas with Tucker* by Greg Kincaid

This is the story of twelve-year old George who, after losing his father, decides to stay a few months with his grandparents in Kansas while his mother and sisters move to Minnesota to be closer to family. One day, George's grandfather brings home a neighbor's dog because its owner went to jail for drunk driving. Though grandpa typically doesn't allow dogs in the house, he sees that George and the canine, which George names Tucker, form a quick bond and lets him stay. The rest is the heartwarming account of a boy learning to become a man with the help of an Irish Setter. A lovely read for adults, kids and animal lovers.



Time-Out: Reconnecting with Kids

If you're a parent, you know that with so many things on our To Do lists this month, it's easy to move "Spend Time with Kids" to the bottom. But that can actually backfire for a couple of reasons: First, unmonitored children will inevitably gravitate toward hours of technology time and that can lead to meltdowns, hyperactivity and a lack of focus on well, *anything* else. Second, we deprive ourselves of the opportunity to unwind and reconnect with our kids.

Here are Laura Elper's tips for making the most of our precious family time.

-Unpluc. Turn off your phone, iPad, TV. Avoid distractions so you can focus on your child.

-Follow. Let your child decide what and how to play. Take their lead on an activity and resist the urge to organize and plan the rules. See where their imagination can take them.

-Laugh. See the world through the eyes of your child and laugh when they do; giggle and smile with them.

For more insight on how these suggestions can relate specifically to your family, please contact [Laura Elpers](#) to schedule a parent coaching session.

Self Care Strategies: Pre- New Year's Resolutions

There's a rather humorous post circulating on Facebook these days that goes something like this:

I'm making some changes in my life. If you don't hear from me soon, you're one of them.

It is natural for all of us to "hang out" with and associate with friends and people that support us and do the same kinds of things we do. If these are healthy activities that's terrific, if however your friends are supporting your drinking to much, eating too much, or perhaps engaging in gossiping you may need to stop and reconsider *how* and *who* you are spending your time with.

Take Two: *Curtain: Hercule Poirot's Last Case*

For Agatha Christie and PBS Masterpiece Mystery fans, *Curtain* marks the end of an era. This is the last book that Christie wrote about Poirot, returning the main character and his friend Hastings to the scene of the first Poirot mystery written fifty-odd years earlier. As always, Poirot is played to perfection by David Suchet, who has portrayed the excessively orderly detective in every Poirot production ever filmed with the exception of one short story. The moody interior of the estate hotel where filming takes place mirrors the contemplative nature of Poirot who is now elderly and confined to a wheelchair. While his sardonic nature remains fully intact we learn new and shocking things about Poirot, including his willingness to be flawed and yes, quite human.

Insights Happenings:

Addiction Recovery Aftercare Group Insights has a mixed-gender group for recovering individuals. The group provides support and skills to help with relapse prevention, thus enhancing the odds of long-term recovery. For more information, call 214.706.0508 or email thinktank@insightstherapy.com

Inner Evolution Group Coaching Inner Evolution Group Coaching is an ongoing women's group designed to enhance a woman's fulfillment, harmony, and inner peace. Our mission is to empower women in their emotional and spiritual evolution through education, guidance, and support. The group will be facilitated by Amy Egan and Robin Knuuttila. To read more about this supportive and healing women's group please visit the [Insights website](#). If you are looking for a deeper connection with yourself and other women call 214.356.7646 or email amy@innerevolutioncoaching.com to reserve your spot.

Our Time is Up: Stayed tuned for our January issue...