

Christmas Traditions: 25 Meaningful Ideas for Families

The holidays are a time to revel in the gratitude and love we feel for one another. Here are 25 meaningful ways to celebrate your togetherness this season.

1. Go for a family nature walk near your home to collect seasonal items that you can use in your holiday decor. If you live near a forest, the obvious choices are pine boughs and pinecones, but long dried grasses can look just as festive tied with a holiday bow.
2. Make a few handmade holiday cards this year as a family.
3. Make appreciation cards. Replace the annual Christmas letter in your holiday cards with a brief letter of appreciation for the recipient.
4. Create or purchase new ornaments each year for the tree. Create or shop for an ornament that reflects a defining event or sentiment for the year.
5. Enjoy a Family Night with special holiday crafts or games.
6. Start a Christmas themed puzzle somewhere in your home. A puzzle table, placed in a quiet room is great for holiday visitors. Whenever your guests want to get away from the action, they can retreat to work on the puzzle. This can be a great stress reliever, and it is wonderful for those guests who always have to be busy doing something.
7. Play special music. Ask everyone for their favorite holiday CD. Allow each family member to choose and keep them in the CD changer.
8. Take a photo of your children standing in a particular spot each year (in front of the tree, by the front door) anyplace that will be consistent from year to year. Make a special holiday ornament or scrapbook album that depicts the growth and change of your family each year.
9. Research the holiday traditions of your nationality. Adopt a few of these traditions into your annual celebration each year to celebrate your heritage.
10. Ask each child to write a Dear Santa letter. (Small children can draw pictures). Keep a special record of these letters in an album or treasure box.
11. Create an evening tradition of taking a family walk or drive in your neighborhood to view the holiday lights.
12. Cut snowflakes from wrapping paper, festive holiday advertisements, or holiday cards, and string them together into a festive garland.
13. Adopt a special cause each year and spend some time as a family helping those in need, or raising or donating money for a charity of your choice.
14. What are your favorite holiday memories? Pose the question tonight at the dinner table. Use the answers to plan the celebration. You may be surprised at the special memories that have nothing to do with gifts or elaborate events.
15. For fifteen minutes, write down things in your life that you are grateful for. Ask each of your family members to join you in creating their own lists.
16. Bundle up and head outside. Make snow angels or build a snow fort with your kids. When it is time to warm up, build a cozy fire and roast marshmallows in your living room.
17. What is your favorite homemade holiday treat? Write down the recipe, and share it with your friends. Encourage them to do the same.
18. Challenge each member of your family to fill a box or bag full of items to give away. Decide as a family where to make a donation.
19. What was the best book you read this year? With whom would you most like to share its message? Purchase a copy for them and drop it off, anonymously.
20. Take your family to a performance of The Nutcracker. Purchase a CD or DVD of the Nutcracker to bring the memories home.
21. The holidays can take their toll. Make a holiday tradition of recharging your own batteries. Gather your daughter and your best friend and head to the day spa for a much deserved pedicure or massage.
22. Reach out to those whom you have not seen all year. It takes a little extra effort this busy time of year, but make a goal to send a card or note to someone you think about but do not see much anymore.
23. Keep a "Joy Journal" this holiday season, in which you record the funny things your kids say, joyful times you share, your favorite things to do with your family (and by yourself), and all the things for which you are grateful. Use your Joy Journal as a reminder of the facets of your life (and this holiday season) that are really important.
24. Give small and simple gifts (homemade cookies or a small book) to a few of the people who make your everyday life easier, such as the trash collector and postal carrier.
25. Share your family traditions with friends and ask them to tell you about the family traditions that make their holidays sweeter.

About the Author

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