

Evaluating Your Family Rituals

You can start with this question: Are your current rituals meeting your family's needs for connection, meaning, and community? As you consider the various kinds of family rituals – from everyday rituals of connection to special occasions and holidays to public family rituals – which areas do you feel your family ritualizes well and which areas need ritual enhancement? Most families have rituals they are happy with, some they have let slip a bit, others they feel bad about or hate, and still others they wish they could initiate. The following questionnaire might help you in this self-assessment.

Directions:

Put a plus sign (+) in the left column if you think this ritual is already strong in your family and does not need much improvement.

Put a zero (0) if you think this ritual could use some improvement.

Put a minus (-) if you think this ritual could use a lot of improvement.

Write "no" if this ritual is not important or you don't want to work on it.

Connection and Love Rituals

- _____ 1. We have meals together regularly.
- _____ 2. Our mealtimes are full of good feeling and good conversation.
- _____ 3. We often share enjoyable family activities at home.
- _____ 4. We often share enjoyable family activities away from home.
- _____ 5. We have rich holiday rituals.
- _____ 6. We share enjoyable family vacations.
- _____ 7. We engage in regular positive contact with our relatives.
- _____ 8. We celebrate birthdays well.
- _____ 9. We have satisfying ways to acknowledge Mother's Day.
- _____ 10. We have satisfying ways to acknowledge Father's Day.
- _____ 11. (For families with young children) We have satisfying bedtime rituals.
- _____ 12. (For couples) We regularly find time alone to talk.
- _____ 13. (For couples) We use bedtime as a way to connect at the end of the day.
- _____ 14. (For couples) We go out alone together on a regular basis.
- _____ 15. (For couples) We celebrate anniversaries in a way that is meaningful to both of us.

Community Rituals

- _____ 1. We regularly see family friends.
- _____ 2. We are actively involved in a church/synagogue/mosque, or a similar community concerned with beliefs, ethics, and values.
- _____ 3. We are involved in neighborhood activities.
- _____ 4. We participate in recreational or educational groups and activities (for example, athletic programs, book clubs, support groups).
- _____ 5. We are involved in activities to better our community.
- _____ 6. (For parents) We talk to our children about social and community concerns.
- _____ 7. (For parents) We are active in our children's school.

After identifying ritual areas that you want to improve, ask yourself the follow-up questions about each of them:

1. Is a ritual missing where you would like one to be?
2. What is the current ritual lacking?
3. Is there too much responsibility placed on one family member?
4. Are family members achieving a balance between individual time and family time?
5. Is an underlying family problem hurting the ritual?

This material, taken from the book, "The Intentional Family", is used with the written consent of the author, William J. Doherty, Ph.D.