

Remembering Family Traditions.

Every family has their own traditions. The ways they manage regular occurring events such as birthdays, anniversaries, holidays and even losses. The tradition dictates how these events are to be practiced and who is to attend. Built in to the tradition is the expectation that those involved will continue to be involved and follow their same roles and implicit rules. The family tradition makes for a shared experience and history between family members. The experience of the family tradition gives family members a common ground, a basis to their relationship. The family traditions are the glue that bind families together over time and space. In short, family traditions give meaning and speak to the nature of one's family.

There is an inevitability with family traditions and just like the apple that must fall to earth, so too do family members feel the tug of their traditions.

For many persons the anticipation of the family tradition is met positively, with warmth and acceptance. For these persons there is a comfort in the family tradition. The family tradition provides for a sense of safety, familiarity and certainty. Whatever else is going on, whatever else is happening, many people can count on the family tradition to offer respite from the storm of life and a sense of belonging and harbour from life's storms.

Even in view of family conflict, for many the family traditions, dictating roles, rules and responsibilities, help structure even fractured relationships. Whilst one may not be pleased with the conduct of others, at least the tradition organizes the conduct of other's so that at the very least there is a comfort with predictability – knowing what may be coming, whether wanted or not. At least one will not be taken by surprise. The family tradition offers a sense of certainty, whether for a good expectation or not. In such situations, the family tradition may seek to be avoided, but in many situations, the pull is greater than the repulsion. We go; we tolerate; we may even fight; all as per the tradition.

And so we are all bound by our family traditions with whomever we consider to be our family. We move

through the calendar year organized by life events and holidays. We carry on by ourselves only to be brought back to the vortex of the family.

We are as bound to the family tradition as moths to the flame until one day a change occurs that threatens or alters the inevitability of the family tradition. That change may occur from within the family or outside the family by circumstances beyond our control; aging; death; birth, marriage; divorce; separation; relocation. The integrity of the family tradition is compromised and the force to maintain it is pitted against forces of change. Uncertainty reigns, confusion sets in and roles and rules break down. Forces to maintain things as they were, fight against the push for reorganization.

There is a period of confusion as the family tradition either withers and dies, or transforms itself to carry on in new ways like the caterpillar changes into the butterfly. Not necessarily something better, but something different yet with the same DNA. In these situations, the tradition lives in on new forms with new guardians who pay homage to the past and contributing tradition. At times, the new tradition is not the changed version, but a melting of two or even more unrelated traditions. Some new traditions must accommodate to new demands; changing times; cross-cultural marriage; blended families; new countries of living.

Time moves on, family traditions change or die. The survivors are either the groomsmen or pioneers. Generations pass the torch to either be extinguished or rekindled, but inevitably, things change. None-the-less, we remember our family traditions.

Ramadan, Rosh Hashana, Thanksgiving, Christmas. The fall is upon us and we are remembering our family traditions. This unites us in our humanity.

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