

A new twist on resolutions

By Erin Harrel

As the New Year rings in, many of us will set forth new resolutions. Some will vow to increase exercise and eat healthier; others might pursue more scholarly goals. Whatever the resolution, most people will put great effort into making them a reality — well, at least for the first few months of the year!

This year, we have decided to place resolutions aside and try to work on creating more family traditions throughout the year. Our children are at the perfect age to begin making habits of some good old family fun. Hopefully, it will continue on into their teenage years.

What's that I hear — a chuckle from parents of teens? Am I fooling myself thinking there is a chance of quality family time beyond the age of 12? If so, could you please not tell me for a few years. ➔➔



Angel and Alexa Whitt

Photo special to Parent & Child

a mother's view

I decided to ask around for suggestions on how to incorporate lasting traditions into our very hectic weekly schedule. I found some great ideas and thought I might pass them along.

Many years ago my beloved sister-in-law, Angel, shared with me a really neat tradition. When her youngest daughter, Alexa (my most precious niece), was having a tough time in middle school, Angel needed a non-threatening way to communicate with her. She started a journal with Alexa.

Every morning or evening, Alexa spends a few moments writing in her journal. Angel encourages Alexa to write down both her positive and negative experiences and feelings. Alexa is even allowed to write about being mad at her mom. After making each entry, Alexa leaves the journal in a

special place in her room. Every morning Angel finds time to read and respond to her entry. It has become a great communication tool and has created a special bond between her and Alexa.

The Cedarburg family shares every Friday night snuggled together on their family room couches. Over the past few years, they have made it a habit to spend Friday nights together eating popcorn and watching movies. So you ask, "What if there is something else to do on Friday night?" The Cedarburgs are die-hard family fun kind of people. They just move it to Saturday night!

Other suggestions came in the form of "story time." Nope, not just picking a story to read — we're supposed to do that every night. This family creates a new story each week. The family thinks about topics of

interest; maybe some place they are going or something that coincides with the kid's curriculum. Then the parent(s) start the story. Each day one of the four children adds to the story. At first the kids were resistant, but after they spent a Saturday morning together reading their story and laughing about how differently it had turned out, they were hooked.


I asked Justin Ambrioso, a coach at Intense Gymnastics, if his family had any traditions. Justin fondly recalled his mother's shredded pork served with rice and beans. When I told him I was looking more for family traditions than recipes, he explained that mealtime is a tradition.

With a family of five very active boys, his mother made a habit of teaching them the art of Cuban cooking. When his mother cooks her famous pork

roast, it is one of the only times his family gathers together to joke around and communicate as a family. I have to agree with him: Home-cooked meals warm the heart of family.

I asked my own children if they thought we had any traditions. They laughed and asked, "What's a tradition?"

After I explained, they thought intensely for a moment and my oldest son was first to respond. He shared his favorite rituals, "bow hunting with my Uncle Bill on Thanksgivings and attending the Dolphins games with my Grandpa." He only wished that every day were Thanksgiving!

Thanks, guys, for being such a special part of our lives! 

— Erin Harrel lives in Cape Coral with her husband and three children.