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Snow Place Like Home

Thoughts of family and home are a frequent theme during the holiday season. Magazine ads and television commercials show peaceful, snow-covered landscapes and depict warm family moments as they promote their products. Their marketing targets our emotions related to happy times and fond memories. Maybe it reminds you of your own family traditions.

Family traditions are activities we do repeatedly that have special meaning or significance to those involved. Research tells us that sharing family rituals strengthens the family. Traditions provide a sense of stability and a feeling of belonging. Many family traditions are centered on holidays or religious beliefs.

Think about the traditions in your family. Is there a special activity that you remember, or perhaps it is special foods that are served at family meals? Does your family still celebrate in the same way as when you were a child? Traditions can change as families change.

You can also create new traditions as the family changes. Think about activities that fit into your lifestyle and reinforce your family values and beliefs. Sometimes new traditions are created as generations shift and more extended family activities evolve.

Many family traditions are related to meals. Research shows us that shared mealtimes are beneficial to families. Whether it is a holiday meal or any day, make it a family priority to share meals. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, shared dinner times as often as possible can be a way to strengthen families and support children's development. Children who share meals with families on a regular basis tend to eat healthier diets than those who do not, and family mealtimes promote family communication.

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For more information, see the fact sheet on University of Illinois Extension's *Healthy Lifestyles: Less Is More* website: <http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/regionwc/lessismore>.

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