

The most important holiday tradition

The holiday season means different things to every family.

We checked in with three Quad Cities parents to see what they love (and stress about!) most during the holidays. Aimee (mom of four), Becky (mom of three), and Rob (dad of four) shared with us some of their favorite holiday experiences, their idea of the most important holiday tradition, and the best advice they have for other parents navigating the season of celebrations.

Now What asks: What are some of your favorite holiday traditions?

Aimee: One of my absolute favorite holiday traditions began in 2006, when, as a newly dating couple, both [my husband's] side of the family and my side of the family came together to celebrate Thanksgiving. This has become one of my most favorite days of the year.

Becky: I love getting and making Christmas cards. Since my birthday is in November, I am not above bribing my children to take a picture for my birthday every year. As a mother, I love having a picture of my family all together.

Rob: My mother made cinnamon rolls from scratch for Christmas morning when I was a kid, and it was a food we only had on that one day each year. When I became a dad I had her teach me how to make the cinnamon rolls, and I've continued the tradition by making them for my family, only on Christmas morning.



Now What asks: What is the most important tradition for your family during the holiday season?

Becky: Having Christmas morning and Christmas day to ourselves. I truly enjoy my kids being home for their holiday break. Of course we all have to get used to being with each other more for a while, but getting that time to reconnect with them is huge for me. We also have multi-cultural Santas in our house. With the make-up of our family, that's important to me. I want all of my kids to see that and I personally want to see that as well.

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Aimee: The most important holiday tradition to me, simply is the gathering of family and friends as we give our time and love intentionally. And specifically reading through the Christmas story from the Bible together.

Now What asks: What's most exciting or fun for you during this holiday season?

Aimee: The most exciting thing for me as I parent during this season is seeing my kids really begin to understand the joy that comes from giving.

Rob: There is a place that sells Christmas trees 4 blocks from our house, so we always take the beat-up red wagon and walk there, get a tree and walk back hauling a Christmas tree through the neighborhood. It's really fun.

Now What asks: What is most stressful for you as a parent during this season

Becky: Trying to stress that Christmas isn't about gifts, and trying to find the balance of that. Finding balance can be stressful. As my kids get older and we are so overscheduled, I try to keep it simple. It used to be that I'd want [the holidays] to be picture perfect, and I found that it wasn't good for my family. Nowadays if we host, we have paper plates, the kids make up a centerpiece, and it's not something you'd find in a magazine. But they have a part in the planning of the day and they really get excited about that.

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Now What asks: If you could give other parents one piece of advice, from your own experience, on navigating the holiday season, what would it be?

Aimee: My advice is to stop and pause and notice the little things with your children. Write it down. Take a picture. Or just BE. Don't let the task list outweigh the "list" of things your children wish for you to experience with them, as the magic of the season captures their hearts.

Rob: I cannot recommend strongly enough that people should turn off televisions and put away phones and tablets at home, if they are not being used for something very important. I've been trying to put my phone in a drawer so I can't be checking it constantly, and get distracted from my family. Just turn it all off! (Until you want to sit down as a family and watch Elf.)

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Becky: Teach your kids that they are important, they are unique, they are one of a kind, they are a miracle. Focus on your child instead of everything else going on – Black Friday, shopping, eating. You have this wonderful child you’re helping go through the world. What can you do [with this time together] to help them realize how special they are?

The holidays can be absolutely wonderful, really challenging, or a bit of both, depending on the day! Fortunately, there’s no right or wrong way to do this season, and the best traditions for your family are simply the ones you enjoy doing together. No matter what the holiday season looks like for your family, celebrate in ways that show your kids just how much they are loved.



Originally posted on the Now What? Blog on 12/21/17. The Now What? Blog served for nearly 7 years to

- 1. Normalize parents seeking support and help as a manner of child abuse prevention*
- 2. Engage community in how they can work to prevent child abuse*
- 3. Work to build resiliency in families through promotion of the 5 protective factors*

Maybe you coach a baseball team or you help care for the neighbor kids from time to time. You are investing in the safety and security of the children in our community. Because it truly does take a village to raise our children, we want to offer the tools needed to bring awareness and education to preventing child abuse.

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