

Fastbreak For Fathers

a monthly e-mail to help you be the kind of dad your child needs you to be.

by Rich Batten, Family and Consumer Science Agent, Douglas County
Colorado State University Cooperative Extension

You are receiving this e-mail because you sent a request to fatherwork@douglas.co.us. You may unsubscribe at anytime by sending an unsubscribe request to the same address. **If you find this e-mail helpful, please forward it to others you know.** Back issues of *Fastbreak* are available online at www.douglascountyextension.org and www.beafanofyourkid.org.

In this issue: Family Traditions

OBSERVATIONS

If it is October second, my back is sore. I can say that with certainty because for the last five years our family has spent the night of October first on the floor. It has become a Batten family tradition to fill the family room with sleeping bags, stories and pop corn on the first night in October. On October 1, 1999 we arrived at our new home in Denver several days ahead of the moving van – not intentionally mind you. Rather than get a hotel room the kids convinced us that we had everything we needed to live for a few nights – a floor, a roof, a fireplace, refrigerator and stove. So we camped out in the family room. That would have been the end of the story except the following year, as I was tucking my youngest son into his warm bed, I reminded him that last year at this time we were on the floor in front of the fireplace. “Hey, that’s right! Let’s do it again!” We did and we have and it is now a tradition.

Family traditions are a powerful and significant aspect of family life. Take a moment and think of your favorite childhood memories. I suspect, that for most of us, what comes to mind are regularly planned activities that took on a special meaning for your family.

It didn’t seem significant at the time, but some of my best memories as a child are embedded in the weekly ritual of spending Sunday evenings as a family eating popcorn and homemade fudge while watching the *Wonderful World of Disney*. As we grew, the popcorn and fudge transformed into homemade pizza, and *60-Minutes* took the place of *Disney*, but the end result was the same – good family time etched in my mind and emotions for life. It was a simple activity that took a little planning, a little cooperation and a little commitment; in other words, it was a small investment that paid big dividends over time.

Whatever the activity, the key to developing a family tradition is to do it together, consistently and with meaning. If the meaning isn’t readily apparent, don’t worry it will come. I would also suggest that you seriously consider including an escape clause that will take into consideration your aging body – my kids have yet to accept the proposal that mom and dad sleep on the sofa bed instead of the floor – “that just wouldn’t be the same,” and they’re right!



Cooperative Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.

IDEAS

Holidays are a great time to develop traditions. What family traditions can you begin, affirm or explore during the months of November and December? Don't relegate traditions to holidays only. There may be a great family tradition hiding in some simple activity or event that takes place today or tomorrow.

Consider these tips for *discovering* a family tradition:

- Look for activities your kids enjoy that can easily be repeated on a regular basis.
- Begin with a core personal value – what could you do, or say that would reinforce that value consistently over time?
- Add your own special twist to common everyday activities i.e. goodbyes, greetings, goodnights, good mornings, meal times or even chores (how could you make taking the garbage out with your son or daughter a meaningful and memorable event?).
- Ask your child what he or she loves to do with you on a daily, weekly, monthly or yearly basis.

Nurture your marital relationship with rituals and traditions. Check out the website of *The Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples Education* for some great ideas:

www.smartmarriages.com/intentionalmarriage.html

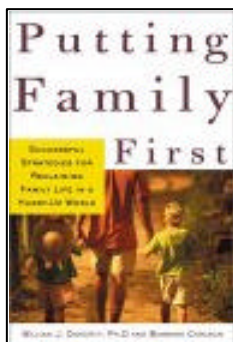
RESEARCH

The American Psychological Association (APA) devoted the entire December 2002 issue of the *Journal of Family Psychology* to the study of family routines and rituals. In one of the studies presented, Psychologist Barbara H. Fiese, Ph.D., and colleagues at Syracuse University conducted a qualitative review of the research over the past 50 years. Their review found that family routines and rituals are powerful organizers of family life that offer stability during times of stress and transition. They also found that routines and rituals are associated with marital satisfaction, adolescents' sense of personal identity, children's health, academic achievement and stronger family relationships. The authors acknowledge that the scientific study of routines and rituals remains relatively immature and deserves further study. Full text of the article is available at:

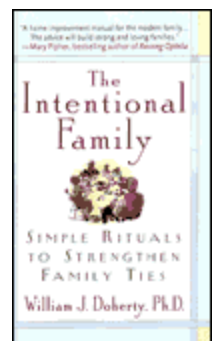
http://www.apa.org/journals/fam/press_releases/december_2002/fam164381.html .

"A Review of 50 Years of Research on Naturally Occurring Family Routines and Rituals: Cause for Celebration?," Barbara H. Fiese, Thomas J. Tomcho, Michael Douglas, Kimberly Josephs, Scott Poltrock, and Tim Baker; Syracuse University; *Journal of Family Psychology*, Vol. 16, No. 4.

RESOURCES



Nationally respected family therapist William J. Doherty believes that we can strengthen the ties that bind us together, and create new, more permanent ones in the process, through the use of family-specific everyday rituals. His books, *The Intentional Family* and *Putting Family First*, offer a myriad of simple yet effective methods for opening regular channels of communication between parents and their children, husbands and wives: from shared family meals and vacations, to regular "story time," weekly drives, religious services, and monthly "spouse only" romantic dinners.



For ideas, theory and connections check out the *Putting Family First* website: www.puttingfamilyfirst.org. *Putting Family First* is a grass roots movement of citizens building communities where family time and family activities have high priority in a world that pulls families apart.

CONNECTIONS (Metro Denver)

Sky Ridge Dads – (Sky Ridge Medical Center) Classes for new dads. Call 720.225.2229 for more information and to register. Downloadable brochure available at:
http://www.skyridgemedcenter.com/cpm/SRMC_Dads.pdf

Father Fraternity – (Parker Adventist Hospital) Classes for new dads. Call 303.269.4390 for more information and to register.

Connecting with your Kid: Becoming the father your child needs you to be. – (Douglas County School District) For dads of school age children K – 12. Thursday evenings February 3, 10, 17, 24, 2005 / 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. What impact do you have on your children? How do you discover the unique needs of your child? How do you become the kind of dad your child needs you to be? These are the kinds of questions you will find answers to in *Connecting With Your Kids*. Participants will interact with four key practices of fathering and will receive direct feedback on their fathering strengths and weaknesses based on a fathering profile of best practices developed by the National Center for Fathering. Maximum class size: 50, Cost: \$30.00. Register by calling 303.387.0128.

Presented by Rich Batten. Rich is the father of four and has masters degrees in both family studies and theology. He is a Certified Instructor for the National Center for Fathering and is certified as a Family Life Educator by the National Council on Family Relations.

“You can’t be the kind of dad tat you want to be. You can’t be the kind of dad that you wanted to have. You’ve got to be the kind of dad that your child needs you to be.”

- Roland Warren, The National Fatherhood Initiative

If you find this e-mail helpful, please forward it to others you know. Subscribe to *Fastbreak for Fathers* by sending an e-mail to fatherwork@douglas.co.us with “subscribe” in the subject line. Non-electronic versions of this newsletter are available upon request by calling 720.733.6926.

Back issues of *Fastbreak* are available online at
www.douglascountyextension.org and www.beafanofyourkid.org.

Fastbreak for Fathers is a publication of the *Douglas County FatherWork Connection*, a countywide, research-based, fathering education and advocacy initiative committed to increasing the probability of every child in Douglas County Colorado being intimately connected to an involved, responsible and loving father or father figure.

**The Douglas County FatherWork Connection is facilitated by
Rich Batten, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent - Douglas County
Colorado State University Cooperative Extension
720.733.6926 / rbatten@douglas.co.us
www.douglascountyextension.org**

Cooperative Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.