



# The Heart of a Family: Searching America for New Traditions That Fulfill Us

*Meg Cox*

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## **The Heart of a Family: Searching America for New Traditions That Fulfill Us** Meg Cox

Parents today face an uphill battle: How can they make a haven of home and create treasured traditions when family time is besieged on every side? As a new mother, Meg Cox faced these concerns and began a quest to find new traditions powerful enough to compete with the distractions and dislocations of contemporary life. In this warm and wise book, Meg Cox shares what she found on her search and introduces us to the families who taught her. She learned what sorts of rituals help hold families together, from grand holiday bashes to everyday bedtime routines, and why they have such a lasting impact on children, guiding them safely through crucial transitions and reinforcing a sense of identity.

Meg Cox interviewed more than two hundred diverse families for this book, and found they are not only celebrating milestones and holidays in distinctive ways but also using ritual effectively in every phase of their lives, from the practical to the whimsical. She tells the story of Suzy Kellett, who raised quadruplets on her own and used rituals to keep the family close. In Merchantsville, N.J., the Lynch family has a "Happiness Party" when everyone is down in the dumps, and Mary Sutton of Wyoming made up a seatbelt-buckling ritual after the family was in a minor car accident. There are rituals here that break up sibling fights, scare away under-the-bed monsters, make an adopted child feel cherished, and celebrate a girl's first period.

Cox's reporting brings us new versions of favorite holiday traditions, as well as fresh rituals tailor-made for the demands of contemporary life. She gives valuable advice on creating new traditions from scratch, and also talks candidly about ritual's potential pitfalls, explaining when and how rituals should be changed or dropped. The "**Heart of a Family**" is a joyous, welcoming, but always realistic book, full of activities and ideas that have been road-tested in the tumult of daily family experience. It will enrich your family life for years to come.

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