

Parenting Tip #5.

Dear Parents,

What place does “ritual” have in the place of a teenager in today’s high paced world?

I recently read an article that talked about the importance of “rituals” in maintaining inner peace. We need rituals such as: Driving the same way to work every day; Having a cleaning routine for the house; Going to Church on Sunday as a family; Exercising multiple times per week; etc. **Rituals help us to feel at peace because we know what to expect and this gives our bodies and our brains a break from all of the stress that goes along with our modern lives that often includes change, chaos, rushing and the unknown. Many people today feel over-stimulated, stressed-out or overwhelmed. Rituals can help us to feel more at peace in order to help us calm down and to step outside of the “rat race”.**

As our society gets busier and busier, it is easy for families to lose their rituals from the past, such as: Eating dinner together; Having set times for homework; Tucking the kids in and reading them a story at night; etc. Having healthy rituals may be especially important for teenagers. **Teenagers are going through so many changes that it makes sense that any type of routine that they can count on is probably a good thing.** During the teenage years, it is especially difficult to help your teenager to establish healthy rituals. Partly because teenagers often search for freedom from family also because teenagers are often in the process of trying to find their own identity. This is a normal and important part of their developmental stage. **This is why we have to think “outside of the box!!”**

Obviously, tucking a teenager in before they go to bed and reading them a bedtime story is probably not going to go over too well! However, maybe having a nightly “check-in” time with your teenager 15 minutes prior to them heading off to bed would be a good ritual to begin. These do not need to be big changes...even small things if they are consistently implemented can give our kids a feeling of increased security. Whatever the rituals are, it can be a good idea to think about two questions: **What are the current rituals that are helping my teenager and how can I ensure that these rituals continue to provide structure, stability and peace to them?**

What kind of new rituals would make sense to look into with my teenager in order to add more stability, structure and peace to their life?

Maybe it would be a good idea to sit down and brainstorm with your teenager about these questions?!

Good luck in your parenting relationship with your teenager(s),

God bless you,

Brian Kinne
Therapist, Catholic Social Services