Tis the Season: Celebrating the Rituals and Values that Give Life Meaning

Handout

Throughout time, across cultural and geographic boundaries, despite diverse spiritual beliefs and practices, humanity has sought comfort, connection, inspiration, and celebration in the form of rituals. Caregivers of Veterans are especially in need of daily moments that provide comfort, holiday events, or seasonal activities that you can to look forward to, that connect you to those you love, that restore your beliefs, that highlight appreciation of nature, or that celebrate the passing of time.

What is a ritual?

- Rituals are repeated behaviors or activities that are infused with an extra dose of attention, meaning, and significance.
- Rituals can be daily activities that provide a moment of special attention, purposefulness, structure, or meaning to your daily existence.
- They can be diverse, unique, passed on from generation, and created anew by simply giving your attention to repeating an activity or behavior that has meaning to you.
- Rituals may be yearly events that commemorate spiritual or national holidays of celebration.

Why are rituals helpful?

- Rituals and traditions can provide a sense of stability and security for individuals and families because it is a behavior or activity that you can count on overtime.
- These practices or events can invite connection with others such as gathering together with friends families or neighbors for a special occasion
- Ritual practices can deepen your spiritual beliefs
- They can reinforce and highlight who you are as an individual or family by defining what matters to you.
- Rituals provide opportunities to celebrate and give thanks, for family friends and community, the changing seasons, nature, and provide events to look forward to.
What are the healing aspects that give rituals their power?

- Many of the rituals throughout time include a quality of being still, reflective, or intentional, and as a result, even the mundane can be made sacred. For a ritual to benefit you, you need to be present and mindful when you engage in it.
- When you investing your heart into what you are doing, any activity can become less a chore and more an investment in yourself or a gift to others.
- A significant quality of ritual and tradition is that of thanksgiving or appreciation. An attitude of thankfulness or appreciation alters the experience of your daily life and gives depth and meaning to your rituals, relationships, and values.
- Ritual or traditional celebrations deepen your bond with others and wrap you in the experience of community.
- Your celebrations with family and friends, sharing food, music, stories, and fun provide something to look forward to from the daily routine or provide needed comfort and support at times of loss.
- Important memories are created in your individual, family, and community rituals.

What are examples of daily rituals?

- Walking the dog, your morning coffee with the newspaper, shared mealtimes, moments of meditation or prayer, reading before bed, bath time, an evening stroll, sitting on the porch or relaxing in the yard, a daily workout or run, after school or after work check ins with loved ones, desert after dinner.

What are examples of yearly or seasonal rituals?

- **Religious Holidays** - Christmas, Hanukah, Ramadan, Easter,
- **Cultural Holidays** - Kwanza, St Patrick Day, Cinque de Mayo,
- **National Holidays** - Thanksgiving, 4th of July, New Year’s,
- **Seasonal** - fishing or hunting season, solsticie celebrations, apple picking, summer camping, golfing, football or baseball.

**Important Ingredients in Ritual Practices**

Stillness, Attention, Purposeful or Intentional, Give Thanks and Appreciation, Honor Nature, and Honor your Values and Interests. A celebration of family, friends, neighbors, food, music, dance, in which you look forward to and enjoy

**Bring your Heart to any Ritual and it will Bless you in Return!**

VA Caregiver Support Line 1-855-260-3274