



## Preserving Family Traditions during the Holidays

There are several holidays which occur during the winter months. The most advertised is Christmas. But there is also Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Ramadan and Diwali. Most winter holidays are based on a religious belief or doctrine. All winter holidays regardless of the origin or culture have some common elements including family gatherings, traditional foods, songs, clothing and gift giving.

We all carry within us memories of traditions passed down from generation to generation which celebrate these holidays and touch our core human needs of love, acceptance and belonging. We also carry within us the sadness of those special family members (and friends) who are not with us in person either due to circumstances or because they have passed on.

How do we preserve those family traditions, passing them on to the next generations including the special memories and “essence” of those no longer with us? What can we do? What should we do? For without those traditions, without those shared stories and memories we lose the core human needs of love, acceptance and belonging.

We offer these suggestions:

### **Within families:**

- a) Set a priority to pass down special traditions from generation to generation. Include the “older” generation in teaching those traditions whether recipes, stories or activities to the next generations. This is more important and meaningful than gifts and will last much longer.
- b) Establish ways of connecting during the holidays, even if you live far away, through phone calls, letters, online technology. Be creative in sharing traditions by mailing family recipes, baked goods, hand crafts. Tell stories and share memories with videos, photos, etc.

### **When your family is gone**

Sometimes our family is no longer around but we can still share the traditions of our family and culture with those in our neighbor, church and community by organizing or participating in holiday activities. This builds new connections and provides us with the opportunity to belong.

When we share traditions with others we honor those no longer with us. This “honoring” keeps them alive in our minds, in our hearts and in our families continuing the love we share forever.