



# February

## happyhome habits

valentine's day & love and anniversaries

Once Upon a Family has developed the happyhome habits to make it easy and fun to build loving connections, instill strong family values and create a legacy for future generations. These habits are based on the "protective" factors" that decades of research have shown will strengthen families against the negative influences in today's world.

Using the power of rituals and traditions, the happyhome habits are things we can do with our families once-a-day, once-a-week, once-a-month, once-a-year and once-in-a-while. They are simple, fun and they give us peace of mind. We know we have accomplished the most important things for our loved ones.

**happyhome habit** **1**  
once-a-day: dinner conversations

**happyhome habit** **2**  
once-a-week: family fun night

**happyhome habit** **3**  
once-a-month: treasured traditions

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by ONCE UPON A FAMILY

# happyhome habit **1**

once-a-day: dinner conversations

Spend time together talking about what matters most. Transform the dinner table into the place where you have fun and memorable conversations that give everyone a sense of belonging. Dinner is our best opportunity to connect as a family - to celebrate victories, talk about problems, instill values and pass on cherished family stories. It's where we teach our children about life. We need to insist that teenagers come to the table and we need to limit the activities that cut into this valuable family time.

## the value of love

What are different ways you like to show you love someone?

## the value of love

What do family and friends do for you that make you feel loved?

## the value of love

Have you ever told a friend/sibling/spouse that you hated them? Did you really mean it?

## the value of love

Why do we feel and think people don't love us even when they say they do?

# happyhome habit 2

once-a-week: family fun night

Stop all the hustle and bustle and do something fun together. Put family first by setting aside a day and time to just have fun: monopoly, bowling, hiking, a craft or cooking project. It's especially important in today's dizzybusy world to show our children that it's ok to slow down, turn our phones off and do something that's not on our to-do-list. Society has convinced us that more sports, music lessons and chess clubs are going to prepare our kids for a better life. Some of that is great, but all the extra-curricular activities in the world will not make up for the lost opportunity we have to build strong family ties.



## My Secret Valentine

A week or so before Valentine's Day, family members draw names out of a hat. Then write a list (or ask mom or dad for help) of nice things you could secretly do for this person. For the next two weeks leading up to Valentine's Day everyone does something nice each day for their "Secret Valentine" without revealing who they are.

When your Secret Valentine is in the shower, the bed gets made. When they are off to a friend's house, one of their chores gets done. While they are busy studying, a sweet note with a treat is slipped under their pillow. Everyone unveils their "Secret Valentine" at a special dinner on Valentine's Day. This is a wonderful way to teach your family that "things" aren't the only gifts you can give.

# happyhome habit **3**

once-a-month: treasured traditions

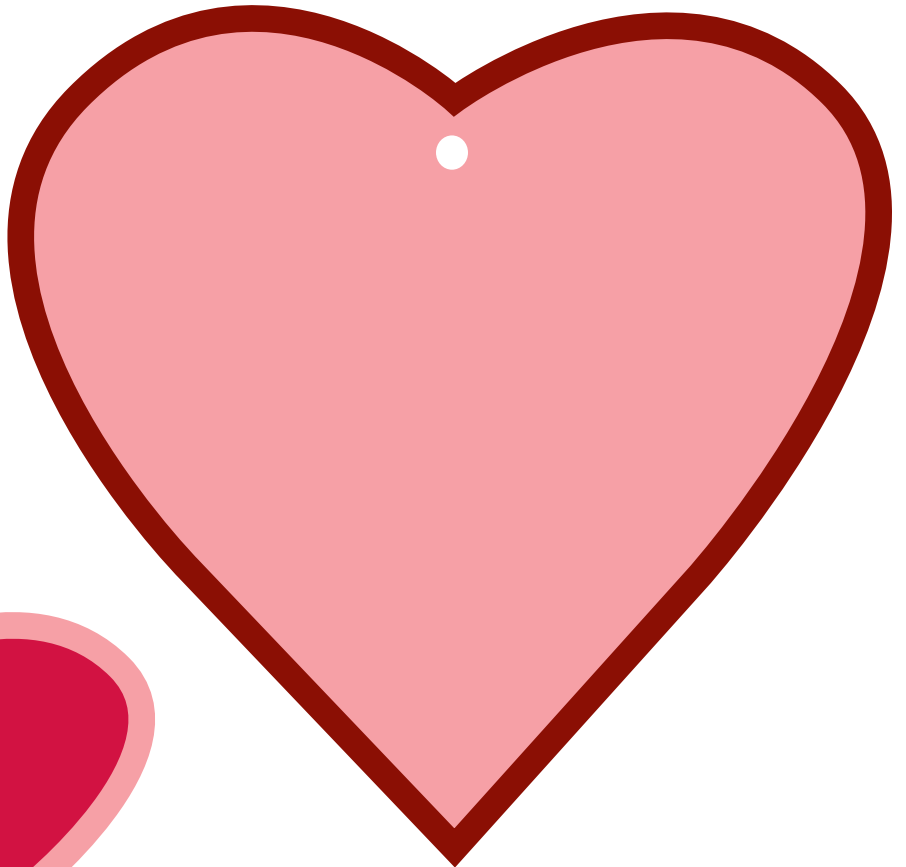
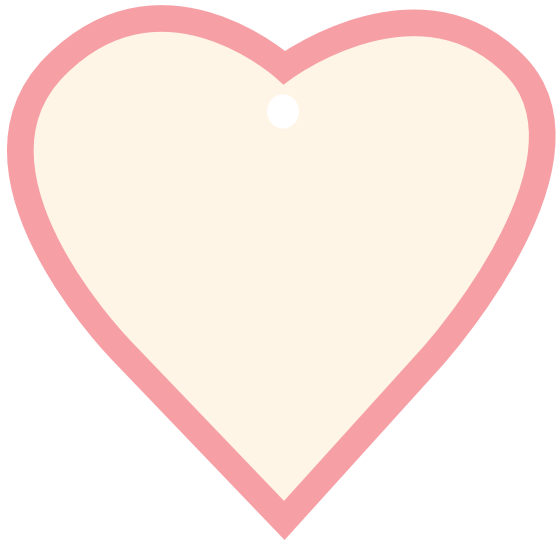
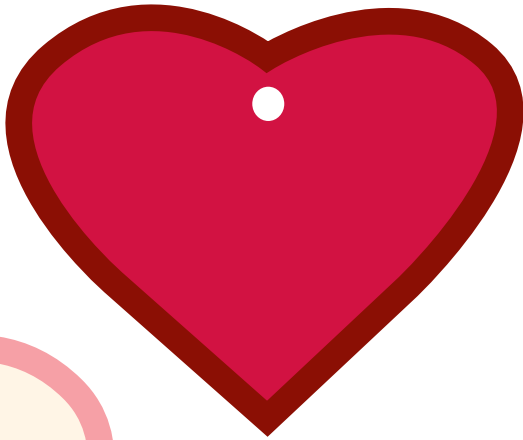
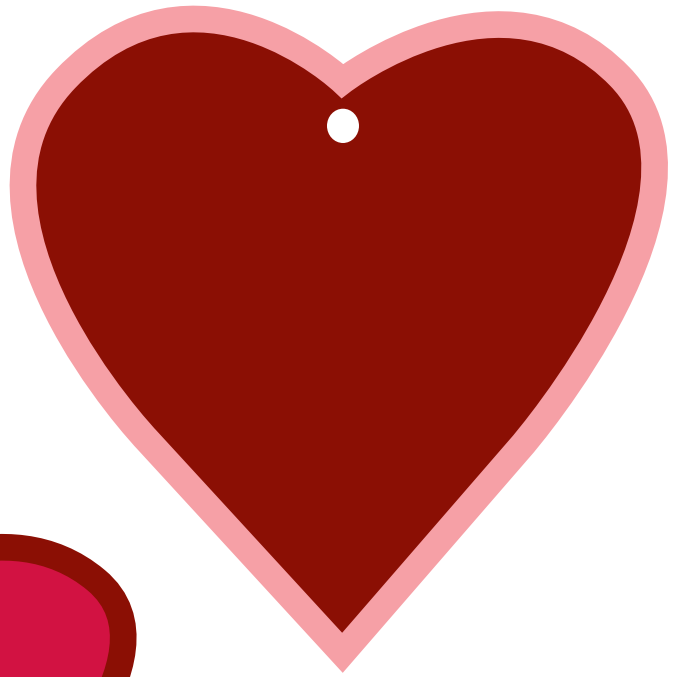
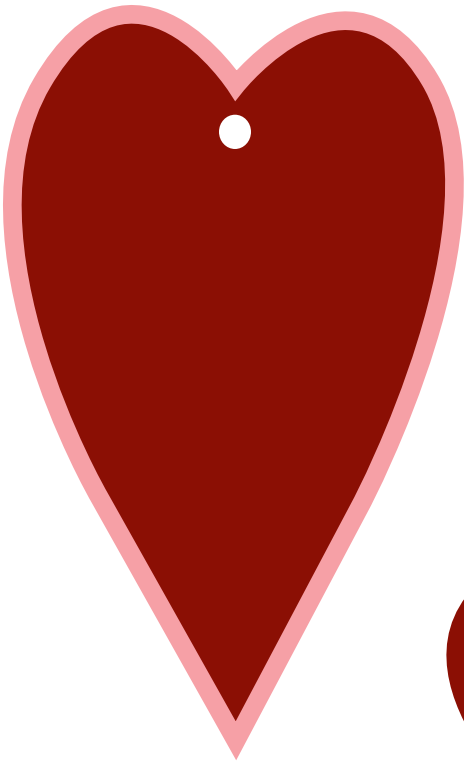
Share a simple family tradition. Many of our favorite childhood memories revolve around family holidays and vacations that we have repeated over and over again. Good smells, good feelings, good times. Family traditions are the building blocks of strong, caring, happy families because they create the memories that connect us forever.



## Hearts of Loving Kindness

Use these pretty hearts during the month of February to teach the value of loving kindness to the loved ones in your life. Find a small box or jar and decorate it (invite your children to help) any way you want: with stickers, artwork, photos, or a big red ribbon. Place all of the hearts inside and tell your family members what it's all about.

Every time you see someone doing something kind for someone else, write their name and what they did on one of the hearts from your jar/box. String it up on a ribbon and hang it in the kitchen or family room for all to see. You can put four to six hearts on a ribbon by slipping each heart up the ribbon and then tie a knot at the top of the heart to hold it in place. The more hearts your family sees dangling, the more they will want to add to the festive display.



# happyhome habit **4**

once-a-year: your family story

Create a legacy of love to pass onto future generations. Dedicate one day a year to developing your own family's story. Write letters to your children. Ask older members of the family to share (write or record) their favorite life stories. Collect precious handprints or fill in a family recipe album. Make a family tree or a family album together as you reminisce over good times. Cut out the cover below along with one or more pieces of plain paper of the same size. Form a booklet by folding the card with the blank pages inside and then stapling them together along the center fold.

Use the Activities Booklet to record a personal story or lesson you've learned about love. Now that you know about the "Five Languages of Love, you might talk about how each family member needs to be loved or a time when you kept trying to show someone that you cared - but the message didn't get across because you weren't "speaking their language." Share your story with your loved ones and describe the experience. You might want to praise a family member, in your booklet, who has recently demonstrated the love.



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# happyhome habit 5

once-in-a-while: gifts of love

Surprise someone you care about with a gesture of love. It doesn't take much to touch someone's heart, especially when it is unexpected. Leave love notes under a pillow, in a lunch box or taped to the steering wheel. Do a chore without being asked. Take the time to really listen and understand. Or send a card of appreciation to someone you care about.

As a family, send a thoughtful and unexpected gift of love to someone who really needs it. Maybe it's a friend or relative who is going through a tough time. Maybe it's a friend or relative who has become estranged because of time or a past grievance. Let that person know you care about them and want things to be good. It's amazing how little it takes to break down a wall, no matter how high it is or how long it has been there. A little love goes a long way.



"To love deeply in one direction makes us more loving in all others."

~ Anne-Sophie Swetchine