

COMMUNICATION

The Meaning of Holidays



20 minutes-30 minutes

Different Holiday Traditions

No matter how much two people have in common there will always be differences, and holidays have a way of bringing these differences to the surface. This activity will help you understand WHY your partner has such strong views about his/her holiday traditions.

Listening to Understand

1. **Take Turns.** Each partner gets to share the meaning of holidays or their holiday traditions when they were growing up for 10-15 minutes.
2. **Seek to understand rather than be understood.** When you are the listener, focus on listening, not what you will say when it is your turn. Refrain from commentary while your partner shares their story.
3. **Show genuine interest.** Ask questions to draw out more details. Questions such as 'What was that like for you?' 'How did you feel about that?' or simply 'Tell me more about that.'
4. **Communicate your understanding.** Let your partner know that you can and are empathizing with what they are saying.
5. **Validate emotions.** Let your partner know that his or her feelings make sense to you by telling them just that whether they are sharing a happy or a sad holiday experience.
6. **Express affection.** Put your arm around your partner, give them a hug, or hold their hand.

Finding Shared Meaning in Holiday Traditions

Once you each understand the other's perspective, you can discuss how you might incorporate holiday activities that have personal meaning into your shared traditions.

