

Family Ritual: Travelling to Texas and Back

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My family is very untraditional and that's the way I like it, without it being the way it is I would not be who I am today. Through the good and bad times, I would not change a thing because I like where I am at and who I am. However, with my family being untraditional we do not have rituals like most families do. So, when it came to figuring out what my essay would be about, I had difficulty finding a ritual as my family has constantly gone through changes and that resulted in a lack of consistency to develop rituals. Be that as it may, there is one thing that we consistently do as a family that has become our ritual. This is my little sister Jamie, my twin sister Danielle, and I travelling from Wisconsin back to Texas two times a year to see our family down there. The times we would travel would be around Christmas and over the summer.

This ritual began when our mother agreed with our father to move us to Wisconsin with him while she stayed in Texas with her husband. This choice was made outside of court because as I had learned during this interview this was not a deal made by law but on their own. Therefore, my sisters and I were not obligated to travel to see our mother/family because of that. Our parents made an agreement in the summer of 2011 that we would move to Wisconsin with our father if my mother dropped the child support back payments and he would take us off her hands. Then, as a result, he will drop her husband, Shane's restraining order. At the time my mother and father were engaged but Danielle caught my mother writing love notes to Shane while he was in prison for theft. Shane and our mother were high school sweethearts and once Danielle told our father he took the ring and left us behind with her. In spite of that, my mother once Danielle and I were born, our mom had checked out as a parent. Therefore, this is where Kassie comes into the picture, Kassie and my father are the ones responsible for this ritual. Kassie took on the role of a guardian or mother if you would have it. Kassie does not like to think of it as replacing or taking on that role as a mother, she says "I changed from a big sister to

a role model, I had to help ya'll grow up and learn". Thus, Kassie and our father did this to help all three of us would have our family and not lose touch because of bad circumstances that were out of our control.

This ritual was initially made to help benefit everyone in our family, especially the three of us, Kassie, and our father. Due to the fact that, even though our mother still had legal custody of us, she benefited from this because she was no longer responsible for raising us, which our father was glad to take on that responsibility. As our mother "put in no effort, she is just incapable of taking care of anyone but still loves us. She just is not fit to be a mother, unfortunately." So, this was a decision made on Kassie and our fathers part to help everyone. Due to the fact that it was not healthy to witness or be apart of. With our mother's push and pull, "she was self-centered and did not put our or anyone's feelings before her own. She only thought about herself and not us. She did not think about who she was hurting." Thus, this decision was made to help everyone to be in a healthier place, including our mother. Moreover, our father benefited from this ritual further with him not having to pay child support and gaining the native money that we received from our tribe. Then Kassie benefited from this because she got to keep the relationship, she had with us and continue to work on it. She wanted this ritual to help us see that we would always be in her and our family's lives and that they would be there for us, especially her. Lastly, Jamie, Danielle, and I benefited from this ritual because we were taken out of a bad situation and home and brought to a better place for us to grow up in. So that we would be given the best opportunities and life possible. Furthermore, we were looked out for emotionally so that we would not end up as bad people or in a bad mental state. They tried to protect us and give us the best out of what we had, and they definitely did that. Moreover, this made us three very grateful in the long run no matter how hard and traumatic this situation was.

We know that without them doing what they did everything would have been worse for everyone in the long run.

As we have grown older and new members of the family have joined, they see this ritual happening. With that being said, this is learned over time and socialized into a routine naturally for everyone once they are old enough to understand what is going on. However, with new in-laws in the family, they usually are not fazed nor do they particularly acknowledge it. On the other hand, one of our in-laws, Kreston, who married Kassie a year ago, he takes notice of it, respects, and understands it. Since he lives with Kassie, he is personally affected by this more than the rest of our family as we end up in their home when we visit. As a result, he wants to be able to take on that role with Kassie as well. Kreston wants to help fill any of the holes that were missed along the way so that we know that he is here for us and wants the best.

This ritual means a lot to me, it is the foundation and functionality of my family. So it means everything to me. This gave us a relationship with our father that we would never have had as we barely had one with him growing up due to our mother. Likewise, it also gave us a stronger relationship with Kassie as it gave her the opportunity to be closer involved in our lives, she became the “second man in line” as she says. She got to see us grow and change, and just experience life with us in a different light than a normal sister would. As we know that the overall meaning and purpose was to keep strong relationships with our family in Texas. This ritual did just that, it gave us an understanding of strength and patience because the distance made it hard to go back and forth. It displayed that love can overcome distance but it is hard, it takes time and practice to get used to it. Likewise, it showed us perseverance as we overcame so many hardships and continue to do so for the ones we love. Overall, one of the biggest beliefs we

gained from this is that regardless of one's birth relationship, relationships and bonds can/will change. From this, we all understand that we have someone in our corner and someone to lean on when we need it. Even though we do not have a mother-daughter relationship or a standard family, it is not important when you have people in your life that can love you unconditionally.

My family might not be normal or traditional, but because of that we can teach people a lot from an outsider's point of view. On that account, this ritual in and of itself with its history and all it would convey to others our strength that we have from going through certain situations. We can be seen as a family of strong, independent girls that have a little bit of sadness behind it all from not having that typical mother-daughter relationship or father figure in our lives. However, this all can teach others that if you make the decision to have kids or get into that role of a parent you need to be in that role and stay in that role. Because kids need stability, love, to know that they are not alone and that the things they are feeling/going through are okay and valid.

The things I have gained and taken away from this ritual is the concept and understanding of the lesson of "learning what not to do " from others' bad behavior. Also, from that how to understand people's feelings including kids because everyone's feelings no matter the age is real and valid. Thus, being a kind and caring person because you never know what a person is or has gone through and that your actions affect more than just yourself. All-inclusively, I learned that we need to not take people and their love for granted as well as to love those who are around you, forgive when you can and that it is okay to set boundaries and to remove people from your life when you need to. Just do what is best for you, life is too short to waste it on negativity.

- a. What is the ritual?
 - b. What is the history of the ritual? How did it come about?
 - c. What meanings, values, and beliefs does the ritual convey about your family? If an outsider observed this ritual, what would it convey about your family to them? Are new family members socialized into learning about this ritual? If so, how does that usually go?
 - d. What new insights did you gain about the family ritual or your family overall as a result of the interview and writing this paper?
1. What is your name and what is our relationship and how has it evolved from this ritual?
 2. What is the biggest takeaway from this ritual for the family?
 3. What do you think can be learned by others from this ritual?
 4. What insights did you gain from this ritual/experience?
 5. What has this ritual taught you as a person?
 6. What did this ritual mean to you and what does it mean to you now? How has it changed and why?
 7. Why did you continue this ritual after mom left the picture?
 8. Who was it meant to benefit and why?
 9. Did it benefit said parties, why or why not?