

Thinking Tank Results Dec 2012. Rituals in Modern Society

This report contains verbatim statements ordered firstly by topic (in green boxes) and then by level of support (most supported first). Note that those in bold were the most strongly supported, those in red divided the group and those in grey are minority comments that did not get enough support to become a Syntheson

How involved are you in festive activities over the next few weeks? Tell us about your own attitude to and experience of rituals

You don't need "official" rituals to have rituals of your own - different and at different periods of the year family gatherings, xmas carolling parties, christmas cooking and baking

rituals are fine as long as they can be somewhat "tempered" otherwise they could be quite boring

It feels like a big task. Not just the work involved (wrapping presents, preparing food etc) but also the ritualistic ways people behave at this time of year

Elaborates on: My attitude to rituals is pretty negative. I like the reasons but I hate the sense of

My attitude to rituals is pretty negative. I like the reasons but I hate the sense of obligation

They are moments in which we take the time to feel united to all other people celebrating the same ritual. It is important to have such moments. They give rhythm to life.

A bunch of relatives coming to stay for a few days

A winter solstice parade and party this evening

Christmas with child, parents and parents in law

We invite friends at home, will visit an humanitarian association, will sing songs together, offer gifts to friends 3 times Christmas .. with priest on Friday, with parents on Saturday and with parents in law on Sunday... quite something... and I still do not have the balls hanging in my Cmas tree

Some of the old rituals appears as not mine, others are new and very welcome

a roasted turkey for a change....

lots of carol sessions

Let's explore the positive side a bit more first. Pause for a moment and consider a ritual you have been involved with that brought you some benefit. Then please share the ritual and how it was beneficial

The positive side is that it creates space for family time, that it creates moments in the family history

My marriage : although I don't believe in God, I enjoyed the ritual.

Is almost a way to learn myself better, getting a deeper insight into myself

Elaborates on: You don't need "official" rituals to have rituals of your own - different and at different eg arriving home. Not just shuffling in and getting straight into the jobs but taking a moment to arrive, greet each other, be present

rituals are positive in so far that they can "force" you out day-to-day professional or social routine and allow to take a step back, even if within specific constraints

Having a cold shower after a family struggle - you are immediately nourished by fresh energy

The checkin and checkout of meetings: To get a sense of the feelings that are in the room, to see the development of the meeting, to get a closer feeling to what happens

It is a big task.. but it is also a big moment... and frankly a nice way to forget the dark cold wet times outside, the crisis, the harsh world and be more open for kindness and people around you

Elaborates on: It feels like a big task. Not just the work involved (wrapping presents, preparing food etc) but also the ritualistic ways people behave at this time of year

Rituals can also be considered as a time to share

rituals are also a way to remind us about our cultural heritage and how different it can be from that of other eg our New Year bonfire. Fires and being outdoors seem to unite people and take us to a more authentic state. Not the same need to make conversation, more doing and being and less following the rules

yes for instance if Xmas is seen as a moment of generosity towards others "familiar" one or not

other beneficial rituals are the different childhood stages to growing up at 6 and 12 religiously driven, but nice to

My first Christmas in a foreign country, Just me and my baby. No family, no friends, no rules. We had a tuna sandwich in the park for "christmas lunch". What a relief...

family rituals can be felt as much as a constraint as "societal" ones

Elaborates on: You don't need "official" rituals to have rituals of your own - different and at different periods of ... in a more relaxed manner

Wow. I must give that a try!

*Elaborates on: Having a cold shower after a family struggle - you are immediately nourished by fresh energy
Eg naming ceremony. Was thoughtful, meaningful, a lovely welcome-to-the-world for the baby without the hangups of religious ceremonies and fixed expectations. Felt freer and more genuine*

Do rituals have a shadow side? In what ways do you feel rituals can hold us back or have a negative too commercial

when too superficial - no time and no space to really pay attention to people

when a ritual is felt more as a constraint rather than an event to look forward to

When the ritual itself becomes more important than its original intention

When everyone pretends

If it's an enforcement and not from within

Rituals are a cornerstone for building trust - at least I'd hope

To some people it can have negatives because of family and social pressures. It is really a personal thing, how we approach all that we do. I tend to seek the best in things.

That we are not conscious in the moment, prejudiced in the ritual

family obligation but no real love

An old Catholic priest once said to me "Rituals are the democratic vote of the dead". He felt we were trapped by

We have several mentions of rituals as a constraint / pretence / trap. What can we do to minimise these they must be considered as occasions - not obligations

A helpful distinction. Personal rituals and traditional rituals. Maybe knowing our own reason for participating makes a difference too. It's not the ritual that has meaning in itself, it is we who choose to bring it meaning (or just go through the emotions)

Elaborates on: Is it possible that we have two kinds of ritual? One that we invent and use as free humans and one that is traditional?

rituals are nothing without myths

*Risk is less if we all allow the ritual (funeral / marriage / Christmas etc) to be flexible, to be personalised
I think rituals are more than habits and are there for important moments in life.. now all these important moments are not always nice but good to have a ritual to mark them*

*Elaborates on: when a ritual is felt more as a constraint rather than an event to look forward to
Is it possible that we have two kinds of ritual? One that we invent and use as free humans and one that is that is exactly why it is a ritual; there is some enforcement, some external framework that helps a group of people to stand still, adapt, recognise.*

Elaborates on: If it's an enforcement and not from within

eg funeral. There can be lots of benefits to a respectful, meaningful acknowledgement of a death. And also the risk of the event management getting in the way of a more personal reaction

Or myths are nothing without rituals? All my children went through a phase of inventing their own religion.

They mostly started with the rituals

Elaborates on: rituals are nothing without myths

I do not have a risk management approach to the festive season

rituals are moments of collective reflection

rituals are also helpful as a way to structure one's life when so many things are changing again

Elaborates on: rituals are nothing without myths

not everyone is all that convinced of some of the myths but rituals are a nice way to keep it alive

Elaborates on: rituals are nothing without myths

*Ritual depend on how we live them, I love giving best wishes to those I care
chosen rituals maintain links*

hence rituals become negative when only the habit is left and when they have become void of any emotion,
Elaborates on: I think rituals are more than habits and are there for important moments in life.. now all these important moments are not always nice but good to have a ritual to mark them

If you were to devise a new winter ritual for 21st century society, what would it look like?

a ritual that encourages me to think of the rhythm of life, the tides, the seasons, the births and deaths.

Get a sense of perspective and stop obsessing about my own trivia

rituals are of course not only religious - what makes a society is rituals and myths but it doesn't have to be going to vote in a democratic country also a ritual?

a ritual that encourages us to look within hearts and also at our global connectedness

Often not but maybe a sense of ritual would make it a more rewarding experience

Elaborates on: has going to vote in a democratic country also a ritual?

no this is a habit.. rituals are about things that make difference in life

Elaborates on: to which extent do rituals exist without a religious dimension (whichever religion) ; is the fact to always start a new day with a cup of strong coffee also a ritual?

*Dictionary says ritual is "an established or prescribed procedure for a religious or other rite"
rituals should be occasions to gather - not to exclude*

A trueness - ritual ... perhaps ... like this: If I was born in Ohio, now i would be this, if i was born in Kabul, now i would be this, if I was born in

this is a very poetical description!

Elaborates on: a ritual that encourages me to think of the rhythm of life, the tides, the seasons, the births and deaths. Get a sense of perspective and stop obsessing about my own trivia

A ritual that includes time for deep reflection in a safe environment

as it can, be in North Korea (do they vote there?)

Elaborates on: has going to vote in a democratic country also a ritual?

these are habits

Elaborates on: Is it possible that we have two kinds of ritual? One that we invent and use as free humans and one that is traditional?

rituals can also have a purely personal dimension and not involve other people

Elaborates on: chosen rituals maintain links

pay tax ritual

to which extent do rituals exist without a religious dimension (whichever religion) ; is the fact to always start a new day with a cup of strong coffee also a ritual?

this might be a purely Christian approach

Elaborates on: rituals should be occasions to gather - not to exclude

Lastly, let's pause for a moment to reflect on today. As you approach your own seasonal rituals, what's the most important thing for you to keep in mind to make good use of them?

pause to think about the meaning of what we do

take time and some distance from everyday life

That it's not about the stuff - or the stuffing! It's about the meaning. I can choose for it to be meaningful

or I can choose for it to be a chore. Right now I am hoping to have the presence of mind to choose

Relax, be authentic, thoughtful of others

Enjoy !

I think you find the right words here.. it is an occasion, we can fill in ourselves deeper and more meaningful.. or decide not to do so - which would be a missed opportunity I think

Elaborates on: That it's not about the stuff - or the stuffing! It's about the meaning. I can choose for it to be meaningful or I can choose for it to be a chore. Right now I am hoping to have the presence of mind

Remember that I can be a master of rituals not a slave

next time let's try to add some background (carol) music

be oneself

reflect on what is essential for oneself

share

be creative

it gives me an opportunity, a reason to a step back from the various obligations form my day-to-day agenda and to pay more attention to others, close or not so close ones

just go with the flow and enjoy the ride (rite??:) right?

Elaborates on: pause to think about the meaning of what we do

wishing you all a joyful celebration with all dear ones

merry Xmass

reflect

Ride the ritual wave!

thank you moderator.. these Thinking Tanks are becoming ritual in itself

I will start working now on my next days rituals.. so that they become a good moment in family history.. thank

you all .. hope you will enjoy yours

Elaborates on: carefully selecting individual presents... which are going to be well used

carefully selecting individual presents... which are going to be well used

missing a glass of warmed mulled wine right now

as long as there is not too much snow... to turn in into a merry Xmess

Elaborates on: merry Xmass

going back in time, thinking about my childhood, about those who have gone: grand parents, etc...

good joke

Elaborates on: just go with the flow and enjoy the ride (rite??:) right?

if it is not ending in riots

Elaborates on: just go with the flow and enjoy the ride (rite??:) right?