Everyday Rituals

Teacher Background

Each day of our lives there are things we do at the same time, in the same place and in the same order. These routine actions become rituals when we intentionally give them a higher meaning and purpose. For example, the action of washing breakfast dishes is, for the most part a routine and function of family living. However, it is possible to take a mundane routine like this and transform it into a ritual by the very act of acknowledging that the action is an example of committed service to family and family living. This acknowledgement adds purpose and meaning to life.

Rituals help us understand ways of being and ways of doing in a particular culture and context. In the classroom context, routines and rituals may involve unpacking our bags, putting books away and gathering for morning prayer, collaborating in learning tasks and positive participation in playground games and activities. Rituals help us to join in and give us a sense of identity and belonging. They help us enjoy special times and activities and they remind us of people and times that are important.

Terrance Deacon, in his book, *The Symbolic Species: The Co-evolution of Language and the Human Brain*, suggests that ritual has been used since the beginning of time to educate and socialise individuals and groups. He also suggests that ritual is an essential process in the development of the human brain and language.

Religious rituals focus on the mystery of the relationships between God, humankind and all of creation. Ritualistic actions, prayers and symbols are used repetitively and respectfully to create an atmosphere of devotion and connectedness with God.