

ENTERTAINING &
ETIQUETTEJudi
HendricksonExplaining
Some Easter
Traditions

Walk into almost any retail store right after Valentine's Day and you'll be greeted by a wall of pastel-colored baskets, plastic eggs, jelly beans and chocolate bunnies. You know Easter is coming.

These fun activities are just some of the things that usually come to mind when we think of Easter, but there's more! These things aren't really the reason why Christians celebrate Easter every year.

Christians celebrate the Easter holiday in many different ways, depending on family traditions and the customs of their denomination. No matter how you celebrate the resurrection of Jesus — whether Orthodox, Catholic, Baptist or non-denominational — Easter is the most important holiday on the Christian calendar.

Churches are often decorated with flowers. A significant theme for Easter is rebirth, which flowers can emulate and symbolize. Traditional Easter flowers include Easter lilies, which are believed to have grown in the Garden of Gethsemane, the site of Jesus' arrest. Other Easter flowers include red tulips, which symbolize Jesus' shed blood.

ANCIENT SPRING GODDESS

Some aspects of modern Easter celebrations, however, pre-date Christianity.

Easter was typically a celebration of fertility, and many cultures associated the celebration with the Germanic goddess of fertility, Eostre, which is where the holiday's name came from. Some cultures called the holiday Ishtar, which celebrates the resurrection of the Tammuz, another pagan god. It seems probable that around the second century A.D., Christian missionaries seeking to convert the tribes of northern Europe noticed that the Christian holiday commemorating the resurrection of Jesus roughly coincided with the Teutonic springtime celebrations, which emphasized the triumph of life over death. Christian Easter gradually absorbed the traditional symbols.

EASTER PARADES

After their baptisms, early Christians wore white robes all through Easter week to indicate their new lives. Those already had been baptized wore new clothes instead to symbolize their sharing a new life with Christ.

In Medieval Europe, churchgoers would take a walk after Easter Mass, led by a crucifix or the Easter candle. Today these walks endure as Easter parades. People show off their spring finery, including lovely bonnets.

EASTER EGGS

In Medieval Europe, eggs were forbidden during Lent. Eggs laid during that time were often boiled or otherwise preserved. Eggs were thus a mainstay of Easter meals, and a prized Easter gift for children and servants.

Eggs have been viewed as symbols of new life and fertility through the ages. It is believed that for this reason many ancient cultures used eggs during their spring festivals. The White House holds its own annual egg hunt on the lawn. The first official White House egg roll occurred in 1878, when Rutherford B. Hayes was president. The event has no religious significance, although some people have considered egg rolling symbolic of the stone blocking Jesus' tomb being rolled away.

EASTER BUNNY

The inclusion of the hare into Easter customs appears to have originated in Germany, where tales were told of an "Easter hare" who laid eggs for children to find. Their children made nests in which this creature could lay its colored eggs. Eventually, the custom spread across the U.S., first in Pennsylvania, through German immigrants. The fabled rabbit's Easter morning deliveries expanded to include chocolate and other types of candy and gifts, while decorated baskets replaced nests.

EASTER CARDS

Easter cards arrived in Victorian England, when a stationer added a greeting to a drawing of a rabbit. According to American Greetings, Easter is now the fourth most popular holiday for sending cards, behind Christmas, Valentine's Day and Mother's Day.

Happy Easter! Happy Passover!
Happy Spring!

Judi Hendrickson of Wheeling is the co-author with Dr. Jeanne Finstein of "Walking Pleasant Valley" and is working with Finstein on their second book, "Walking Woodsdale." She teaches etiquette and presents programs on Tea Time Traditions, the History and Etiquette of Tea and Wedding Traditions.

TOPICS: HOME & GARDEN

Book Helps Parents
Impart Organization SkillsBy BETSY BETHEL
Life Editor

Mom of three, teacher and professional organizer Lisa Bates wants to help parents raise children who are organized. To do that, parents obviously must understand organization themselves, something many harried families struggle to accomplish these days.

The end goal, she stresses, isn't to have a home that looks like it came out of a Pottery Barn magazine, but to "live better."

"Meeting with clients, working with families, even giving workshops, I see and hear so much sadness and embarrassment from people about how they are living. I wanted people to know that 'feeling' organized is much more important than how something looks. If your goal is living better, then every step you take in that direction is a good one," said the Cape Cod, Mass., resident in an email interview last week.

In her new book, "Barbies in the Horse Bin: Living Better With Organized Children," she wants to help parents begin the process of becoming more organized. She said it begins with a three-question assessment:

"Can you find things when you need them?"

"Do you get things done when they are due?"

"Are you living better?"

She writes: "One of the best determinants of successful organization is if your family or your children can bring their belongings, their life or their space back into order when necessary."

This leads to living better, she believes.

"Being organized allows for a more flexible and balanced lifestyle because you are not caught off guard by the unexpected, delayed by the missing or stressed by the complexity and pace of everyday life. Organization in your everyday life leaves more time, money and energy to create, live and explore the better parts of life," she writes.

Bates understands on a personal level what parents go through on a daily basis. She became a mother of twin boys when her daughter was 1. Her kids are now teenagers.

"I promised my twins when they were born ... that they would not miss out on anything in life just because they were twins. It honestly took a tremendous amount of effort, organization and planning to get us out the door most days; however, every time I wanted to give up I thought about my promise to them," she said.

She related the kids' first playdate was to the church down the road. "I packed the toddler, nursed, changed and loaded the infant car seats. We had a very successful day, the twins slept through the entire adventure, and I felt my confidence soar. It wasn't until the drive home when I felt a presence next to me in the driver's seat. I nearly went off the road, when I heard my toddler say, 'Mommy you didn't buckle me in.'"

Her solution?

"Systems and mental checklists became very important for me and the safety of my little brood. ... I very quickly learned the value of organization, planning and building habits."

THE FABULOUS 15

The book is written purposefully in a conversational tone — from one parent to another — so readers don't feel Bates is being preachy, judgmental and authoritative.

In teaching children to "live better," Bates — who has a master's degree in counseling psychology — writes it is important to understand executive functioning, which is a skill set children must develop as they grow. It involves the ability to follow multi-step instructions, adjust to changes and solve problems.

Toward the end of the book, she outlines the Fabulous 15, activities that lead to better organization: categorizing, chronological thinking, containing, creating, estimating, evaluating, memorizing, order, planning, reusing, referencing, revising, sequencing, sorting and timing.

"Modeling, discussing and demonstrating these skills, and incorporating age appropriate questions and activities will reinforce these concepts with your child and will ultimately have

everyone living better," she writes.

Under each category, she defines the activity and provides examples of questions to ask and tasks to perform based on a child's ability level — beginner, intermediate and advanced. The next chapter provides daily activities that enhance each skill — playing games, packing for school or a trip, creating art, preparing a meal, etc.

BARBIES IN THE HORSE BIN

She also keeps reminding readers that children must be allowed to be children while also learning these valuable skills.

She shares in the book, for example, that when her daughter was 7, Bates decided it was time to teach her to be organized, so they cleaned out her bedroom together and bought bins and labeled them: one each for the most prominent collections, Barbies, horses and stuffed animals. "A place for everything and everything in its place" is the old adage.

Twice in the next week or so, however, Bates noticed two Barbies in the horse bin. A bit miffed, she confronted her daughter: "Didn't we just organize this room? You are supposed to take care of your things, not just drop them wherever's easiest." She demanded her daughter tell her why she kept put-

ting the Barbies in the horse bin.

Confused, her daughter replied: "Those are the only two Barbies who know how to ride."

"To this day," Bates said in her email, "I can picture her face; she clearly did not understand my annoyance, and she was right. She called me out on something much more important than keeping order in her bedroom. She made me look at myself through her eyes and I saw a parent that I did not want to be.

"I think the story stays with people because we all have those moments as parents, forgetting what it means to see the world as a child."

LET THEM DO IT

On a related note, one of the most important pieces of teaching organization is to let children do it themselves. How does it feel when you accomplish organizing a room? she asks. Don't you want your child to feel the same sense of accomplishment?

"It is vital that parents refrain from 'fixing' what their child has done because it inhibits the child's ability to learn and more importantly to build self-confidence and hopefully self-esteem," she said. "Learning comes from both successes and more importantly failures. When a child is frustrated with a task, fixing the finished project for them does not invoke the child's desire to accomplish or succeed. It is hard to watch our kids struggle until we recognize that struggling is important and can lead to even greater successes."

She acknowledged there will be times when a child needs to be bailed out.

"We are constantly thinking on our feet, responding, correcting, enjoying, 'what if-ing' and more so the bail-out decision comes into play when you have the opportunity to help or let natural consequences prevail. ... What will happen if you don't bring the lunch to school or run the soccer cleats up to the field?"

She added: "No one is perfect, we forget things, misplace items and more." But if it happens often, it might be good to nip the bad habit in the bud and let the consequences play out.

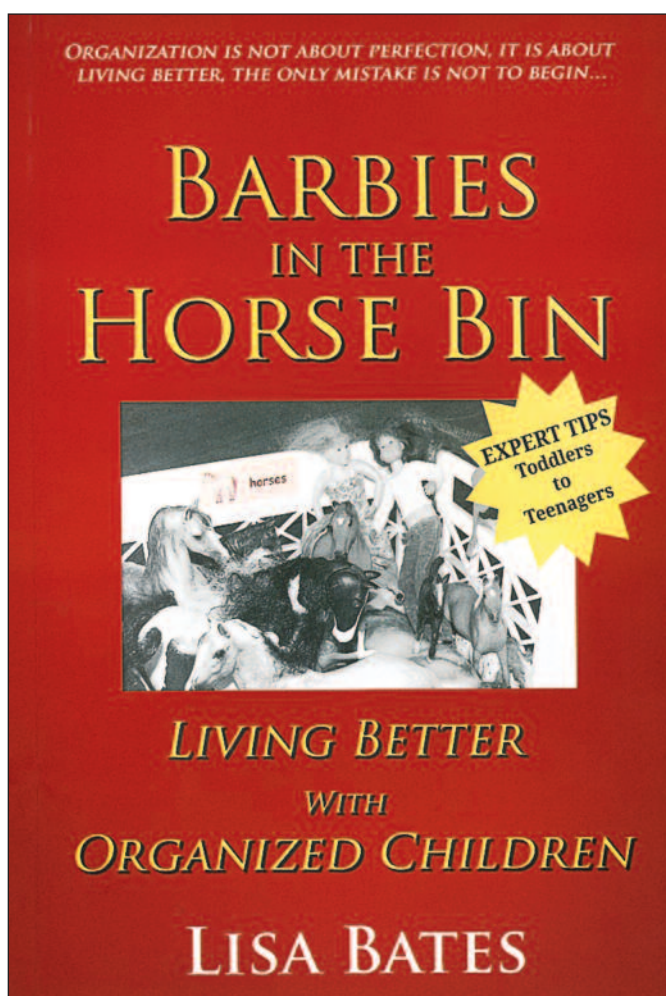
It's also important to remember to be flexible.

"There is a balance between the organization and maintenance of routines and systems and the ability to let things go," she writes.

This is where prioritizing comes into play. There may be certain things that drive you crazy about your home and other things that aren't a big deal. Beds being made doesn't bother her, for example. Work on your hot-button issues and let everything else be "good enough," she writes.

Finally, remember it is a process.

"I believe that life is about living better. Trying, failing, succeeding, starting over, living better has the connotation of being a process, not a declaration or an end goal. Organization is a broad, comprehensive process that will never be perfect or 'finished,'" she said.

DEAR
ABBYAbigail
Van BurenToday Is a Day
To Celebrate
Biting Gators,
Big Tonsils

DEAR READERS: In honor of April Fools' Day, I'll share a couple of offbeat letters I've received from readers who have attempted to pull my proverbial leg. Enjoy!

DEAR ABBY: I'm writing to brag about my boyfriend. He's a semi-professional alligator wrestler and super brave. It's a tough job and it takes him away from home a lot. It's also a very dangerous job. He often comes home with bite marks all over his neck and shoulders, and scratches on his back.

Want to know something weird about alligators? Their natural odor smells a lot like perfume. When my beau gets back from a tournament, he often reeks of it. The first time I smelled it on him, I was worried. But after he explained it to me, it made perfect sense. (Just another one of life's coincidences, I guess.)

We're so happy together. We have four beautiful children, and he promises we'll get married soon — right after the next tournament. I know you get lots of letters about bad relationships, so I thought I'd let you hear about a good one. — GATOR GIRL IN FLORIDA

DEAR GATOR GIRL:

That's a good one, all right. You may have thought you smelled perfume, but I smell a rat. Be glad your boyfriend doesn't wrestle cougars because I hear they wear indelible lipstick.

DEAR ABBY: A teacher at our high school took some time off to get a breast augmentation. Before she left, she told the class she was having her tonsils out. When she returned to the classroom with a larger chest, one of the students cracked, "Nice tonsils!" Of course, the class roared. What do you think about this? — GEORGE IN SOUTH CAROLINA

DEAR GEORGE: I think that unless her students pay more attention to what she's teaching and less to her chest, they may be earning double D's.

And now ... back to work:

DEAR ABBY: When does an extramarital affair actually start? Is it when the two parties involved do the mattress mambo, their first kiss, or is it sooner? — CLUELESS WIFE IN CANADA

DEAR CLUELESS:

A love affair involves more than having sex. An extramarital affair begins as soon as a man or woman starts sneaking around and lying to his or her mate.

DEAR ABBY: Please settle an argument my ex-husband and I still have. Over the course of our marriage, we had problems. One night we had a nasty spat, after which he moved out and never returned. He claims I should have asked him to move back in. My response has always been that he chose to leave, so I shouldn't have had to beg him to come back. Your opinion, please? — WONDERING IN CRYSTAL LAKE, ILL.

DEAR WONDERING: In my opinion, you and your ex-husband should stop arguing because after your divorce became final, the question became moot.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Abby shares more than 100 of her favorite recipes in two booklets: "Abby's Favorite Recipes" and "More Favorite Recipes by Dear Abby." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$14 to: Dear Abby, Cookbooklet Set, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

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Lisa Bates