Everyone on the face of planet earth has some sort of a family tradition or a reoccurring ritual that they follow. People have been following these traditions for years as a way of life, whether due to religion, work, or socialization methods. Although there are many good rituals that make a family feel unique and proud, others make the average person cringe. Some traditions are frowned upon and are considered horrific or taboo. Yet, to the ones who participate in the rituals, most feel what they are doing is the best and only way to participate. Not all rituals should stick around. Some traditions prove very harmful physically and mentally and need to cease. With a first step, change is possible but not easily done. Change is possible and was proven by Oliver in “Oliver’s Evolution” and the townspeople in “The Lottery.” The townspeople should learn and change from the example left by Oliver. If a person in Oliver’s position can change, there is no reason that anyone cannot change, especially the average townspeople. Change is possible, and breaking tradition and rituals are not always harmful to families or villages.

Family traditions have been around as long as humankind has existed. Traditions and rituals lead families and villages in their way of everyday life. The majority of traditions are passed on to children from their parents, therefore, “parents play an important role in modeling healthy behaviors to their children” (Schoeppe para.8). Most follow these traditions blindly and never question what they are truly following. Following tradition blindly is one of the most obvious themes in “The Lottery” by Shirly Jackson. An entire village participates in the lottery
for good luck and good crops in the following year. The tradition is passed down from generation to generation. The methods have changed very little over the years. No one speaks up, and everyone keeps following this tradition even though many question it. Nobody says anything because then they are frowned upon once they try to speak up. “Summers spoke frequently to the villagers about making a new box, but no one liked to upset even as much tradition as was represented by the black box” (Jackson para.5). Since Mr. Summers is the leader of the lottery, it is just pushed off and forgotten about when he says anything. Everyone in the village comes together as a unit at the time of the lottery to test their luck. Nobody is alone or singled out in the event. Everyone tries to stay in order as planned to keep their odds for the best outcome as optimal as possible.

By tradition, a day is chosen to conduct the big lottery event. Everyone in the town must show or someone must be there to draw for them. By tradition, “the children assembled first” (Jackson para.2). Before the children assemble on this specific lottery, the kids have their own tradition of picking rocks before the event. “Bobby Martin had already stuffed his pockets full of stones, and the other boys soon followed his example, selecting the smoothest and roundest stones” and before long, “They made a great pile of stones in one corner of the square” (Jackson para.2). The children followed Bobby because he was the first to start the tradition this year and “the practice of rituals and perceived social connectedness have been indicated as protective factors for adolescents” (Malaquias 3). The children followed Bobby for the social connectedness or to not feel like the odd child out. Once the children finished gathering a few stones the men began to gather. Once the men began to gather, “they stood together, away from the pile of stones in the corner, and their jokes were quiet and they smiled rather than laugh” (Jackson para.3). Jackson put this line in her story to emphasize that everyone knew what was
about to happen and everyone was nervous. Everyone falls in on the ritual instead of speaking up and trying to change it. Change is possible, but it must start with the individual people instead of society.

Anyone can overcome and change. No, it may not be easy, but it is possible. A great example of someone overcoming their past and completely changing for the better is “Oliver’s Evolution” by John Updike. Oliver had a very rough childhood. He grew up in a sad excuse for a family in today’s times. As said by Dragioto, “logistic regression models found that participants experienced childhood trauma had a higher risk of overall hostility” (para.7).

Against all odds, Oliver overcame and conquered his poor childhood. In Oliver’s childhood, he was born with inverted feet. To correct this, he had to have casts placed on his feet for a long period of time. He grew up with the casts on his feet crawling around and scraping everything. Once the casts came off, “he cried in terror because he thought his casts were a part of himself” (Updike line 6). He was later able to walk and run overcoming his childhood feet issues, but this was only the beginning. Next, in Oliver’s tweenhood, his parents finally decided to separate. At this age, it hit Oliver the hardest as the rest of his brothers and his sister was much older or younger. Oliver “felt the weight of the household descend on him” (Updike line 27). This led to bad grades and many automobile accidents.

Oliver managed to surpass those bad times and make it into adulthood where he tries to make the most of life. Oliver decided to get married to a girl named Alicia. She happened to be just as bad as him when it came to misfortune and mistakes taking place. This led to an interesting attraction. “Oliver was solid and surefooted, and she looked up to him” (Updike line 39). It was at this point Oliver realized that all his struggles and mistakes were all worth it to be there, and be strong, for someone who needed him. They later have a kid and Oliver feels his life
is finally complete. The last line of the story is, “He is the protector of the weak” (Updike line 43). John made this the last line of the story to emphasize how much Oliver had overcome and learned in his life. This led him to become the father for his kids that he never had. He had finally become the man he wanted to be against all odds. It all started with the desire and drive to better himself for a greater purpose.

Deciding not to change or question traditions and rituals can lead to tragedy. The lottery in this story is human sacrifice chosen by a method of the lottery like a raffle lottery. Before the lottery, all the cards are thrown into the black box. A winner is chosen after everyone draws from the box. After the winner is chosen, “the children had stones already. And someone gave little Davy Hutchinson a few pebbles” (Jackson para.79). Davy Hutchinson was the child of the mother who won the lottery. It was completely normal for the child to help stone his mother to death. They took her down the square where the pile of stones chosen by the children earlier awaits. To prove the tradition, and possibly the issue or roots of the ritual, Old Man Warner was saying, “Come on, come on, everyone” (Jackson para.80). This was to prove it is the elders in the community that strongly believe in the tradition or the ritual of the lottery. The lottery is not something civilized modern culture can handle. Rituals like this are viewed as cold-hearted and to some extent taboo. Jackson told this part of the story to make the reader feel the impact that traditions can have and especially to the children who are involved. The everlasting damage was done. It was just so natural to everyone that no one questioned it. This tradition could have possibly been stopped if just one person tried hard to convince others to join them in their beliefs. The tradition has changed since the very beginning and will continue to change until the day it ends in various forms to accommodate new obstacles. The problem is the longer the tradition lasts, the more death and emotional damage will occur.
In conclusion, tradition plays a huge role in everyone’s average daily life whether they know it or not. The traditions taught to children at a young age, by parents mostly, can influence the decisions they make in teen hood and adulthood as well as everyday simple decisions. As said by Chen, “Emerging data suggest that during childhood, close family relationships can ameliorate the impact that adversity has on lifespan physical health” (Chen page 4). For the most part, traditions and rituals are good but there are always the bad traditions as well. Traditions are passed down from generation to generation, within families and villages, but do occasionally change, or are modified, to accommodate new obstacles or beliefs. The bad traditions can, and will, eventually make a negative impact on the children, which is more reason to try and end them. Ending any kind of ritual or tradition just starts with one person that can convince others to make a difference because no one can make a difference or change the world on their own.
Works Cited


Jackson, Shirley. “The Lottery.”

