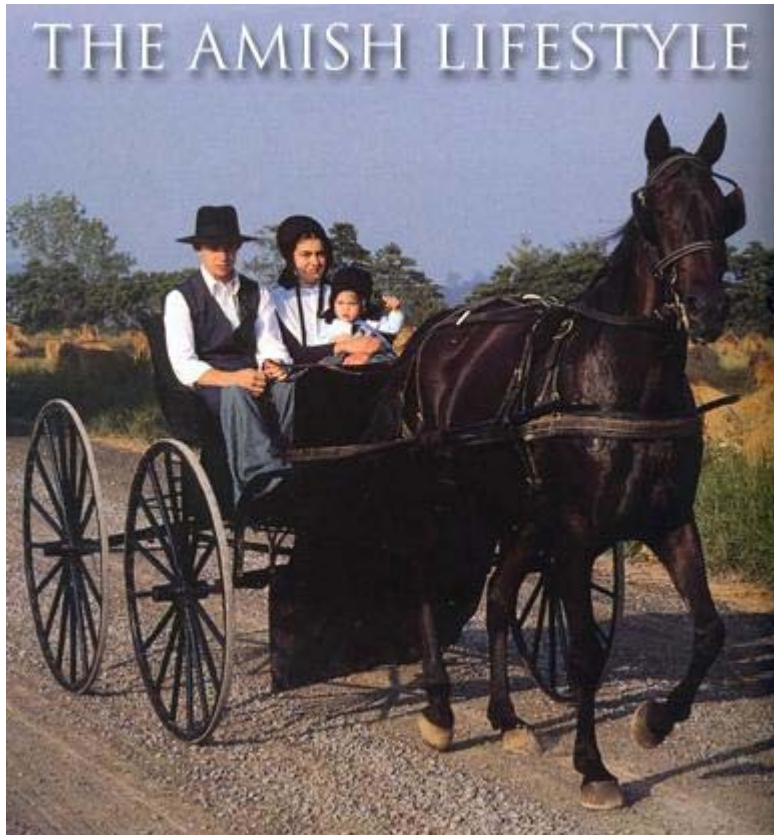


THE AMISH CULTURE



<http://amish.net/lifestyle.asp>

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I. Description of Culture

A. Demographics

- Nationwide there are Amish communities in twenty-eight states including the province of Ontario. Three-fourths of the Amish live in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana
- The Amish do not live in isolated colonies, villages, or compounds. They are scattered throughout the countryside, around small rural towns and interspersed among “English” (non-Amish) farm families
- Approximately 150,000 Amish nationwide
- In 2005, approximately 100 Amish people living in the town of Smyrna, Maine.

B. Brief History

- The Amish trace their roots to the Anabaptist movement, which began in 1525 in Switzerland
- Most Anabaptists eventually identified themselves as Mennonites after the Dutch leader Menno Simons
- In 1693, Jacob Amman, a Bishop, led a group that separated from the Mennonite churches of Switzerland. These followers became known as Amish.
- Began arriving in the United States in 1700’s, settling in Pennsylvania as part of William Penn’s “Holy Experiment”
- The conservatives then became known as the Old Order Amish. This order tried to control cultural and technological influences from the larger society. They believe that the church, guided by the Bible, is responsible to institute guidelines for how its members act in all areas of life
- The Amish believe it is very important for Christians to be separate from the world, both inwardly and outwardly. This is reflected in their dress, their form of worship, their language and their use of technology.
- The Amish is commonly known as the “Plain People.”

C. Foods

- Most foods are homegrown (farmers)
- Amish will eat purchased food but tend to buy from other Amish within the community
- Keep food by canning, pickling, smoking (meats), and by using propane refrigerator
- Hunt game

- Amish use either wood or kerosene oil stoves
- Amish prepare most of their food from scratch, but some also use mixes and instant foods. They preserve all of their own fruits and vegetables. Homemade bologna is popular and is made without the casing
- Many families have their own milk cow and make cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt, and ice cream
- They eat a fairly balanced diet.
- May drink alcohol (mostly wine) on special occasions (holidays & weddings).

D. Dress

- Make own clothes; fabric is typically solid in color.
- Simplicity, modesty, and humility are stressed through the conservative style of dress
- Different clothing carries different meaning such as woman wear caps single pleated, drawstring in back, with hair covered. White caps signify marriage. Capes are straight, apron pinned, both are black, and dresses are small pleated skirt. Girls wear bonnet style caps, stand-up crown, bow in back, various colors worn until age 10. School dresses are pleated skirt, apron black with buttons or snaps.
- Women are not permitted to cut hair, wear makeup or wear jewelry
- Married men are expected to grow a beard.

E. Language/communications

- Pennsylvania Dutch, a German dialect, is spoken in the home
- English is used outside of the home.
- Formal German is spoken in the church.
- Men greet men and women greet women with a quick kiss on the lips.
- Few have phones and therefore, going to peoples' homes, businesses, or schools may be the best method of contact.

F. Holidays

- Recognize nine or more Christian holidays throughout the year
- There are no elaborate festivities or decorations.
- Christmas is the most cherished holiday with the attention on Christ's birth.
- On December 25th, exchange gifts, but also celebrate the "Old Christmas (of Epiphany) on January 6th
- Holidays are family oriented and may encompass the community.

G. Religion

- The Amish are Anabaptist: they believe in God and Christ as their savior
- Jacob Amman's belief in the use of shunning and strong Church discipline is evident still
- The Amish have small group congregations with services held in a persons home or barn
- The place of service alternates amongst community members and is followed by a community meal which is sponsored by the host.
- The Church Board consist of Deacons, Ministers and Bishops
- Their simplistic, non-worldly way of life is based on scripture

I. Family, Relationships, and Roles

- The family is the most important aspect of the Amish life.
- The husband and wife become one flesh in marriage.
- Children are most valued and nurtured and most families have ten or more children according to God's teachings.
- If one spouse is banned because of sin, then the other spouse will join the rest of the Church members and shun him/her.
- Man is considered the head of the household and main provider but a husband and wife make decisions together.
- Women's domain is the house itself; cooking, cleaning, raising children, and supports her husband and family
- Cooking, itself, is considered a form of art.
- Gathering around the family table is one of the most important routines in the home
- The family engages in silent prayer before and after meals
- Children are often given a farm animal as a pet and are responsible for taking care of their pet. As a result, the child learns the consequences of routine feeding, growth, birth, sterility, disease, death, or neglect
- At sixteen for boys and younger for girls there is a period called "Rumm shpringa" (running around), a time when young adults consider the faith and make decision as to what their life path will be.
- Adults are rebaptized into the Church if they choose the Amish faith.
- Once adult commitment to the Church is made, one will be excommunicated if he/she leaves the Church.
- The Amish believe strongly in the scripture, "Thou shalt not kill" and will not participate in war.

II. Concept of Work/Play/Time

- Work is highly valued
- Community involvement is expected
- Children are involved in playful activity once chores are completed such as baseball, volleyball, ice skating, and horse and buggy races
- Children attend school until the eighth grade
- Most Amish children attend Amish schools, though in a few rural areas some attend public schools.
- Amish schools do not utilize any technological equipment such as computers, overhead projects, television, DVD's or VCR etc.
- School curriculum consists of English, writing, reading, grammar, spelling, penmanship, and math
- The school emphasizes the culture of Amish living and beliefs and they do not learn about religion rather they learn how to live a religious live
- There is little to no emphasis placed upon higher education in the Amish community
- Once eighth grade is completed children are expected to work in the community
- Men's leisure usually consists of hunting, fishing, and attending horse auctions, whereas women tend to quilting, sewing, or crafting in groups

III. Health and Wellness

A. General Information

- Babies are born in both hospitals and at home with doctors and midwives attending.
- Immunization for children is becoming a more common practice.
- Genetic disorders, such as dwarfism, are often seen among the Amish due to their small population size and intermarriage.
- Another genetic disorder has plagued the Amish community, which has not yet been named. Due to intermarriage, rare genetic flaws have appeared referred to as the "founder effect." Many Amish carry this flaw (founder effect) and marry someone with this flaw; resulting in children born with genetic disorders requiring specialized healthcare services (continued research is being done to identify the genetic markers of these rare genetic disorders).
- The Amish seek outside healthcare providers.
- The Amish do not obtain insurance or utilize public support or assistance.

- The community pools together to pay hospital or doctor bills, often anonymously.

B. Challenges to Healthcare

- Amish prefer natural/holistic care and may not seek the offered healthcare of the area.
- Amish often do not use preventative healthcare services, so health care providers often see Amish people with advanced healthcare issues (ex. Cancer, high blood pressure)
- Some health issues aren't identified or understood due to limited educational resources
- Genetic disorders or healthcare issues often seen as "Gottes Wille" (God's will).

C. Suggestions for Healthcare Providers

- Address adults as Mr., Mrs., Ms., etc.
- Healthcare issues should be addressed to both husband and wife, decisions are made together
- The Amish culture is a community that supports members in need, healthcare providers should accommodate visitors
- Preventative healthcare education should be incorporated into visits by using culturally competent materials and methods.
- Healthcare messages need to be conveyed in a way that is meaningful to the Scripture based Amish culture

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