



Handling the Holidays

The holiday season is upon us, and for many people that means decorating the house, baking cookies, entertaining friends and family, attending holiday parties, welcoming houseguests, and shopping. The sound of holiday music can be heard everywhere you turn. Families want their holidays to be special and happy for everyone, especially their children. But what many parents fail remember is that although the sights and sounds of the holidays can bring about joy and high spirits, the hustle and bustle of the season can also produce a great deal of stress for both adults and children.



Happy
Holidays!

December

Managing Holiday Stress

Because parents and children are especially vulnerable to at this time of the year, it's important to remember that you all need to find some time to relax and enjoy the this wonderful time of the year. But how can parents expect children to relax when they are running around like crazy, shopping, baking, decorating, entertaining, and becoming stressed at the thought of blowing the holiday budget after just one trip to the mall?

You can help your children beat the holiday stress beast by following these tips:

Limit TV and video games — It's very easy at this time of the year to allow the TV and video games to become the baby sitter. But children who are stressed need some type of physical activity or exercise.

Remember routines — For parents of small children, this is especially good advice. During the

holidays children will find their routines disrupted. They are often dragged along on shopping expeditions or taken to events over which they have no control. And when a routine is broken, stress can result.

Nutrition — Ever notice the lines at the fast food restaurants as it gets closer to the holidays? They are getting longer because parents typically are too busy to go home and cook a nutritious meal. And factor in all of those sugary holiday treats, and you end up with a stressed out, hungry family. Plan at least one healthy meal as a family everyday. And don't forget to toss in a healthy snack while you're visiting the mall.

Family traditions — Many people fail to underestimate how important traditions are to themselves and their children. Family traditions offer great comfort and security for

children when everything in their lives is being disrupted by the holiday season. If you don't already have treasured family traditions, now is a great time to start some!

Attitude check — Parents need to have an attitude check before the holiday season begins. Take a deep breath, and pledge to make the holiday season a time of joy and peace. With the right attitude, that goal can be met and you and your child will be better able to enjoy the season.

Rest and relaxation — Everyone, especially children, needs to take a "time out" over the holiday season to rest and relax. For parents of younger children this is especially good advice, because a well-rested child will be much happier on a shopping trip than one who is in desperate need of a nap. Schedule some R & R time for everyone in the family.

Laugh — Laughter is still the best way to beat stress and change everyone's mood from bad to good. Take time to laugh!

An Important Reminder: Relax and Enjoy

The holiday season doesn't have to be a time of stress and exhaustion. Make sure to take yourself so that you are able to enjoy this time of year with your child. In doing so, you will be doing your part to make the most wonderful time of the year live up to its reputation. You and your children will be glad you did!

TIPS FOR TRAVELING:

Talk about the upcoming trip

Discuss/model traveling behavior expectations

Show excitement about the trip

Pack plenty of favored snacks

Bring novel toys that will entertain

Make sure your child is well rested prior to departing

Reinforce and praise good traveling behavior!