

10 Ways to Reduce Holiday Stress



All of us react to stress - sometimes with physical symptoms, like headaches or upset stomach, or with irritability, depression or overeating. Children may respond by behaving poorly, withdrawing from activities or being overly active or cranky. Here are a few suggestions that may help you get more joy out of the time spent with your child by reducing or controlling holiday stress.

Use these tips to make this holiday season be more of what you want it to be:

- 1. Be realistic.** Be realistic about expectations of family and friends. No one is perfect and the holidays won't suddenly make them so. Family members will be the way they always are. If siblings fight, they won't suddenly stop just because it is a holiday. When choosing which friends to spend time with during this month, surround yourself with the supportive ones. There isn't time or energy to spend with the ones who agitate you. Help your children be realistic about what to expect as well. Model for them that the holidays are about more than gifts. Teach them how to handle envy when a friend gets the toy that they wanted. What should they do when family get-togethers are filled with tension or adults are arguing?
- 2. Reassess.** As a family, decide which activities are important and which can be eliminated. Are there things that you do because you have always done them? Have you stopped enjoying them? Have your children outgrown them? Look at how you can do the activity differently.
- 3. Start a new tradition.** Find one activity the family enjoys and create a new tradition this year. Rituals that occur every year are comforting to children and help create positive holiday memories.
- 4. Prioritize.** What has to be done and when? Plan ahead on how to use your time. If you plan and schedule activities, you won't feel so pressured. Tell your younger children what the final plans are early enough to help them get ready for family visits, dinners or other big events.
- 5. Keep your routine.** During this hectic time, changing the normal family routine can be stressful to children. As much as possible, stick to regular mealtimes and bedtime. If there is a big activity, make sure your child is rested and fed. Keep a snack handy for an afternoon activity that lasts longer than anticipated. If your child is slow to adjust, tell him/her what to expect, who will be there and how long you will stay. Once you get to the activity, stay close by until s/he feels comfortable.
- 6. Delegate responsibilities.** Ask for help around the house or divide tasks among adults and older children. Can everyone pitch in to help bake the cookies or cake?
- 7. Simplify.** Plan easy meals, especially on those days when there are other commitments. How big a holiday dinner do you have to cook?
- 8. Plan for fun.** What do you enjoy? Try to enjoy activities that would be fun for you and your children. Go to a movie that all family member would enjoy or have dinner at your favorite restaurant.
- 9. Share your memories with your children.** Children enjoy listening to their parents' memories when they were at the same age.
- 10. Carve out time for yourself.** When everyone is on holiday at the same time, parents find themselves committing to others; but not scheduling time for themselves. Make a little quiet time - maybe a long bath or a walk by yourself or time to read. Make sure you are getting enough rest.

No matter how much you love and adore your kids, there will be moments when parenthood is tested to its limits.

Coping with children when they are off school for a while can be quite an endurance test of even the most laid back parent. The challenge of entertaining the kids whilst maintaining the usual chores at home can be quite a handful to juggle. Don't feel guilty.

When the kids are at home, away from school and many of their school friends on holiday, parents face a hitherto unheard problem; Boredom. Children like the discipline and routine during school. Everything is organized and follows predictable routines. As much as all kids are looking forward to their holidays the enthusiasm often wears off after only a couple of days. Once the novelty of living into the day has lost its excitement the days become long and boring. School friends may be on vacation and there is no one to play with but the parents or siblings.

Here you are forever looking for ways to keep the little darlings busy and out of mischief. The kid's holiday rarely is a holiday for parents. Your workload is easily doubled and you probably can't wait for school to begin again.

The holidays in December add warmth to the cold winter. Try to enjoy the holiday with your children. Give them passion, attention. Listen to them. Converse with them. Keep the warm tone by staying cool.



Grandparents Are Important

A child benefits from having the unconditional love only grandparents can provide.

Just being a grandparent is an important part of the child's life. To a child, a grandparent is an adult who loves him/her, loves his/her parents and who his/her parent love. They provide him/her with a feeling of comfort and security, different from any other loving adult in the child's world.

Dearly Beloved

Many grandparents love the opportunity to be a playmate to their grandchild. They read books, play games, cook treats. A grandparent may be the one a child turns to when s/he carries a burden too big to share with anyone else.

Your children's relationship with your parents will depend greatly on your own relationship with them. You all have the best interests of the children at heart, even if you don't see eye to eye.

Dealing with your parents

Grandparents differ in how much they are willing to be involved. While some can hardly wait to have grandchildren, others feel they have done their bit in raising you. Some are willing to live with you or care for baby, while others think it is now your turn. Some genuinely look forward to spending time with little ones again. Or you find they are a little too eager to participate, you may have to make your limits clear. Some grandparents keep their distance because they don't want to interfere with how you bring up your children. Some are willing to take an older child for an evening, while others are not capable of handling them alone.

Make the most of whatever kind of grand parenting they offer; they are important in your child's life too. When you respect your parents' limits, the grandparent-grandchild connection can be the best gift you

Holiday Feature: Car Journeys With Kids

Travelling long distances in a car with young children isn't as awful as you might imagine.

They'll be excited about the prospect of going on away, so make the journey seem like a great adventure and an exciting part of the holiday.

Be prepared!

Preparation is the key – so start planning in advance.

Food on the move

Take a packed lunch box with lots of small food items, and plenty of drinks. Consider the mess factor too – melted chocolate gets everywhere, and carbonated drinks are bound to spray when opened. Dried fruits, raw carrot sticks, apples, and jelly sweets are easier on the upholstery.

*If your child is prone to car-sickness, avoid eating or drinking heavily before or during a journey – in particular, fatty foods and fizzy drinks seem to upset the stomach. If your efforts fail and your child is sick, be sure to replace lost fluids with frequent small sips of cold water. Reading or colouring can bring on nausea, so stick to verbal games or games like *I-Spy* which involve looking at distant objects.*

Car wars

If squabbling breaks out, distraction is the best tactic. You could suggest a new game or take a pit-stop if a service station is nearby.



Start NOW

Eating dinner together, for many families, has become a lost art, but it is a simple, effective way to raise healthier children. The importance of regular family activities to share ideas and “what’s happening” is a great way for a parent to be involved, discuss rules, monitor activities and friends, and be a good role model. The benefits of eating together will last long after your meal ends, especially if you make family meal-times a regular activity. Eating dinner together every night is an opportunity to open the doors of communication. This will help you find out more about your children’s likes, dislikes, and daily life. Having this information can help you direct your children toward positive activities and behavior, reducing the likelihood that they will get involved with negative habits.



Tips to Help You Survive Family Gatherings



“Let your child be. Stop hovering and allow him/her to enjoy being with his/her extended family. S/He feels accepted and s/he relaxes.”

“If someone says something negative about your child, smile, pause then say something positive about him/her.”

“Be realistic in your expectations. Don’t let your kids be unsupervised in a large gathering of family, assuming that someone else will keep an eye on them. Set boundaries as to how much time you’ll spend away from your home, and what is customary and normal for your family.”

“Have your child bring activities [to the gathering] that he is familiar with, and that can be shared with other family members easily. For a child with problems socializing, this can be the icebreaker, allowing him/her to explain and to share his/her knowledge and expertise. This [also] makes it easier for other children to have an initial focus on things other than ‘that kid.’”

“Do what you feel is best for your child! Don’t worry about what others will think or say. If someone criticizes your child, you or your parenting/discipline style, stand up for yourself in a nice way!!”

“If you see things starting to fall apart, try to change the dynamic, or excuse yourself and get your child out of there.”

“Do not overstay; leave before your child wears you or the family out.”

“Don’t be afraid to say “no” to family members. If you have a difficult child, your job is to spend time with him/her and give them the best possible holiday experiences. The stress sometimes associated with traveling to family and trying to keep your child ‘in line’ is not worth it around the holidays...Give yourself a break.”

Set aside time with your children to read to/with them, play a game, or take a walk. Remember that our children, in most cases, will only be with us for a season, before they are grown and gone and we’ll wish they were around!”

“Relax and enjoy as much as you can!”



New Beginnings for a New Year

Celebrate the possibilities of the upcoming New Year! Look toward the future and reflect on the past with your children. If you’re holding a party, involve them in the festive celebrations by engaging them in crowd-pleasing handmade crafts that highlight the New Year theme.

Our Purpose

Understanding how stressful life is and living in a demanding community, we offer busy parents some effective tips to help your children succeed in school and life. On your behalf, we search for and provide you with the most practical ideas to promote academic success, effective parenting, a solid home-and-school partnership, healthy habits, and positive character traits.

You might find these sites useful:

<http://familyfun.go.com/>

childparenting.about.com/od/activitiesandfun

http://www.lifecereal.com/LFE_FamilyFun/FamilyFunIdeas.cfm

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