



Reducing Holiday Stress

The holidays are a time for family and friends but sometimes we let stress overshadow the good times. If you find yourself stressed this year, following these tips may help you and your families enjoy the holidays with less stress and more fun!

■ **Set realistic expectations by keeping it simple**

Holidays can be stressful when people put pressure on themselves to have a “perfect” holiday.

Solution: Keep it simple! The holidays are about being with friends and family, and none of us are perfect. Be yourself and enjoy the people around you for who they are.

■ **Don't try to do too much**

Scheduling too many activities during the holidays can put a big strain on both you and your family. Feeling exhausted increases your stress creating a vicious cycle.

Solution: Don't take on more than you can handle, learn to say “No,” and do not over commit yourself or your family. Don't be afraid to ask for help! What children really want is to spend time with you!

■ **Reduce travel stress by planning in advance**

Traveling during the holidays (or having guests at your home) can cause extra stress due to traffic, lack of sleep, and added responsibilities such as packing.

Solution: Plan your trips in advance, and do not be afraid to limit the stay of your own guests. Plan for the unexpected and remember traveling can be hard on kids, too. Bring games, books, magazines and snacks.

■ **Surround yourself with family and friends**

Negative memories of past seasons sometimes resurface during the holidays, often adding more stress.

Solution: Surround yourself and your children with safe, supportive people. Being with loved ones can provide strength and nurturing during a difficult time.

■ **Set differences aside and enjoy the holidays**

Relationships can cause turmoil, conflict or stress at any time, but tensions are often heightened during the holidays.

Solution: Set differences aside and try to accept family members and friends as they are. Shift the focus to positive interactions by engaging with the children in games, gift wrapping and baking.

■ **Budget and think homemade for your gift giving**

Overspending is the leading cause of family stress during the holidays. Parents often go overboard on spending and end up neglecting the importance of quality time with their family.

Solution: Your family and friends do not want you to go into debt due to holiday gifts or events! Buy smaller gifts, create handmade gifts and spend more time with your family...remember it's the thought that counts!



■ **Embrace all cultures this holiday season**

With so many different cultures and holidays, children can feel different, out of place or confused, which can lead to family stress.

Solution: Talk to your child about all of the holidays people celebrate and why. Spend time learning about other holidays so they understand them as well as your own.

■ **Take care of your health and your loved ones**

During the busy holiday season, many people increase their use of alcohol and drugs, decrease sleep, and consume more food than usual.

Solution: Take good care of yourself and your family! Get proper rest, eat healthy foods, and avoid alcohol or drugs.