



Don't Stress the Holidays

The holiday season is exciting for all but especially for young children. Everything is new, fresh, and exciting. There seems to be a neverending stream of parties, get-togethers, presents to buy and wrap, special events, holiday treats to bake, and family getting together. With all the magic of the holidays, children can become overwhelmed and overtired, stressed, anxious, frustrated, and cranky as the change in their routine and the busyness can throw off most children. Below are some easy steps you and your family can take to help ensure you have the best holidays and family times in the upcoming days.

- 1.** Remember they are kids. There may be some traditions or events which are better suited for adults. Try to keep these to a minimum or only schedule one a day. Include a time where they can engage in physical activity and also get plenty of rest or time that is not scheduled.
- 2.** Give your child a chance to help out. This may mean setting the table or wrapping presents. If they are younger they can help by sticking on bows or even coloring their own wrapping paper. Give them small jobs to help out so they feel part of events.
- 3.** Keep your routines. While the holidays are a nice break to focus on family time, children love routines and knowing what comes next. When their routine is changed, completely taken away, or they have no warning of these changes, children can become stressed and anxious, causing them to act out. Keep constant what you can and warn your child

beforehand if the schedule or routine will be different. Be aware of how they are feeling and be ready to step in and give them a break if needed.

4. Take the focus off of getting presents. While it is fun to get presents this is also a good time of year to learn about the joy of giving presents. If your child is too young to buy a present then they can make or help select a present. Give the gift of time. Memories last a lifetime when toys and clothes can be grown out of or destroyed.

5. Manage how many treats they are getting. There are so many sweet treats during the holiday season that it can be easy to let your child overindulge. Try to manage this by agreeing beforehand which treats they can have when or how many each day. This can help to ensure they get to experience this aspect of the holiday without overdoing it.

6. Don't overschedule. Pick what is most important for you and your family, maybe a few things a week rather than an event each day. Events will be enjoyed more when the children, and adults, are not overtired from running from one event to the next.

