

## Tips for Parents—Coping with the Holidays



- Consciously be quieter and slower moving around your children. You will likely benefit as well from this conservation of energy!
- Schedule activities over several days so all the excitement doesn't get overwhelming for everyone.
- Maintain as normal a routine as possible, scheduling special events during time freed by holiday vacation, and allowing for plenty of sleep for all family members.
- Be selective about the activities you choose to involve yourself in. Choose those which are important to you and your family and fit your lifestyle. You will most likely find that some of the other activities pressing for attention can be let go without hindering the festive mood.
- Concentrate on people instead of objects during the holidays. A fun time making cookies is more important than beautiful cookies. It's the time you have together that children remember, not how nice the decorations look.
- Try to have regular, sit-down meals with good nutrition. Slow down rather than eating on the run. Cut down on caffeine, salt, alcohol, and sweets. Too much produces the same symptoms as stress.
- Touch the people you love. A gentle touch has the opposite effect of stress: it slows the heart and breathing, reduces muscle tension, and calms both physically and emotionally.
- Get some exercise—walking, swimming, and gentle stretches can relieve the tension and keep your body and mind well-tuned.
- The “whisper hour:” when noise levels get too high, set a timer for an hour. During this time everyone in the house must whisper. This not only lowers the noise, but also adds a touch of excitement and mystery.
- Do not expect children to be happy and appreciative all of the time. They may feel upset by the changes in routine.
- Let your child help you as much as possible. She wants to be a part of the festivities, too. This approach helps to maintain the emphasis on family celebration of shared responsibilities and joys.
- Avoid tasks or people that anger or irritate you, or change your attitude about them, trying to see something silly about them. Remember, you can control your feelings by your attitude about stressful events.
- Prepare your child for family gatherings by sharing photos of guests.
- Incorporate quiet times during your day. Soft, slow music; quiet, cuddly stories; or a walk outside may help bring your child's activity and anxiety levels down.
- When you have the ability to set the schedule, plan high peak celebration times during your child's best coping time of the day.