

Seven ways parents can manage holiday stress

December 11 2013

With children home from school, days getting colder and shorter, and pressure around traveling, shopping, and gift-giving, many parents will think "Bah! Hum-bug!" at least once during the holiday season. W. George Scarlett, who teaches at the Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development in Tufts University's School of Arts and Sciences, offers parents some commonsense tips for coping:

Get organized early-This means more than buying gifts ahead of time. It also means planning menus in advance, including kid-friendly favorites, and ensuring there are plenty of games and other materials to keep children busy whether traveling or at home.

Establish family traditions-The holidays can be chaotic, and children, especially younger ones, can find change upsetting. Be sure to maintain traditions that are fun, inspiring or thoughtful. They can include gift-giving or decorating, visiting relatives, attending [religious services](#) and [holiday celebrations](#), caroling or reading aloud. Traditions serve as positive [family](#) experiences and give a structure to the holidays that kids find comforting.

Ask for and accept help- If you are navigating the holidays with a partner or spouse, work together to get tasks done. Give kids as well as adults a role and don't be afraid to ask visiting family or friends to help.

Make time for your nuclear family- Include extended family and friends in festivities but leave space and time for your nuclear family to

be together without others. This creates a feeling of normalcy and calm during the holidays.

Teach the importance of giving and sharing- Bring awareness of others and their needs into holiday family conversations and activities. Encourage kids to select and donate to a non-profit agency that means something to them or pick items to give to a local toy or clothing drive.

Plan something for yourself after the holidays- The holidays will go better when there is something to look forward to after they end. Plan a little something for yourself.

Don't spend time on regret- When the [holidays](#) are over, don't spend time regretting things you did and didn't do. There may be changes to make next year but don't dwell on mistakes. Keep your sense of humor. Laughter can do wonders to transform holiday ups and downs into memories your children will cherish.

Provided by Tufts University

Citation: Seven ways parents can manage holiday stress (2013, December 11) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-12-ways-parents-holiday-stress.html>

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