

Holidays can be tough on kids with ADHD, anxiety: Some tips for parents

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Kids with emotional problems or ADHD can find the holidays a very challenging time, as all the routines that provide a sense of order are jumbled in a whirl of activities.

The kids are home from school and restless, their [parents](#) are hauling them along to Christmas shopping and holiday gatherings, and they're eating lots of heavy meals and sugary treats.

But there are ways to limit the stress that the holidays can place on [kids](#) with depression, anxiety, an [eating disorder](#) or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), said [Melissa Meyer](#), a child psychiatry specialist at DMG Children's Rehabilitative Services in Phoenix.

Communication is key when it comes to outings, Meyer said. Knowing what will happen can help decrease a child's anxiety.

For example, let children know what's going to be happening ahead of time—how long you'll be out, who will be with you, what kind of food they can expect.

And don't be afraid to share with your child if you're feeling stressed, tired or anxious, Meyer said.

"He or she will take comfort in knowing that even adults get nervous and stressed during the holidays," Meyer said.

Sleep is another important component to maintaining your child's mood, Meyer said. Kids with [emotional issues](#) need good sleep, at least eight to 10 hours a night.

Meyer also cautions against using screens as a babysitter. Too much TV, [video gaming](#) and [social media](#) can contribute to depression and rob a child of needed sleep.

Parents should make sure that their kid continues to take their medication at the same time each day, even though the holidays have

disrupted their regular schedule.

And watch out for the usual holiday sugar rush, Meyer said. Serve regular nutritious meals and limit sweets and sugary drinks, especially before bedtime.

"Most importantly, be aware of the child's mood and listen to him or her," Meyer said in a DMG news release. "The child or teen may need some downtime in between the hustle and bustle of the holidays. Allow time in the family's schedule for everyone to decompress, so each member of your family can enjoy the spirit of the holidays."

More information: The Mayo Clinic has more about [children's mental health and the holidays](#).

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