

Holiday Stress - Information for Parents

Holiday Stress

Even though the holidays typically mean presents and no schools for most children, it can also be a stressful time of the year. It can be particularly difficult in families facing financial challenges, in split or blended families and in families where a loved one has recently passed away. Even without additional challenges, the holidays can be a stressful time.

<http://www.nctsn.org/>

Holiday Blues

For some of us, the holidays can be a low time when feelings of sadness, loneliness, and anger can intensify when contrasted with the joy expected of the holidays. Consider some of the following strategies to help. Remember to reach out for support if needed.

What can parents do to reduce their stress levels?

The holiday season can bring on a dizzying amount of demands as a parent. Remember what is important and consider some tips to reduce holiday stress.

Strengthen social connections – reconnect and surround yourself with your supports. Strong, supportive relationships help us manage all kinds of challenges and stressors.

Set expectations - set realistic expectations for gifts and holiday activities. The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. Choose a few things to focus on and keep flexible.

Keep things in perspective – the holiday season is short. There is not enough time for everything so determine what's important and what can wait until after the season.

Take care of yourself – pay attention to your own needs. Physical activity, diet, and sleep are all important to staying mentally and physically healthy over the holidays. Remember to also allow time for yourself.

<http://www.apa.org/>

Reminders of what parents can do to promote their child's mental health over the holidays.

Remember many children struggle at this time of year as schedules may be less predictable and demands of them change. Expect relapses in your child and yourself –accept mistakes and try again. Reduce your expectations for yourself, your family, and your children. Don't expect "best company behavior."

Remember your "presence" and focused attention is the greatest present you can give your children. Years from now, they won't remember the gifts, but they WILL remember your times together.

Look for opportunities to praise! Notice any positive child behaviors and label them with approving words. As you have guests over during the holidays, praise any cooperative, polite and friendly behaviors you notice between your child and others. Don't forget to praise yourself as well for staying calm and taking time for yourself!

Consider using those holiday goodies as spontaneous rewards for the positive behaviors you want to see more of in your children.

<http://www.incredibleyears.com/parents-teachers/articles-for-parents/>

Strategies for kids/teens:

Consider the list of positive ideas a child or youth could do over the holidays to reduce possible holiday stress. Pick out the ones that would be best for your child.

Do something nice for yourself.

- Sometimes the simplest things can feel great. Warm yourself up with a cup of tea or hot chocolate. Put on your favorite holiday music and decorate your house.
- Get outside! A walk, some fresh air, or a winter sport can all help to boost your mood.
- Being stuck indoors doesn't have to be a drag. Make a gingerbread house, watch festive movies, or get crafty!

Maintain structure.

- Stick to a healthy sleep schedule even over the holidays.
- Many holidays include eating rich foods. A balanced and nutritious diet can have a big impact on your mental health.
- Is there's something you want to do but never seem to have time for? Schedule it over the holidays and make it happen!
- Use time off over the holidays to get uncluttered and organized!

Count your blessings.

- Acknowledge or celebrate your achievements of the year. Write down your strengths and let yourself feel proud.
- Make a commitment to yourself to make your mental and emotional healthy a priority in the New Year. Make a goal that is focused on the positive.

Reach out to others.

- If you've been keeping to yourself lately, now is a great time to reconnect with friends and family.
- Do something nice for someone else. It can make them happy and you!
- Enjoy a day of baking with friends or family. Learn how to make a holiday classic or create a new tradition.
- If necessary, let loved ones know if you plan on being alone for the holidays and have a safety plan in case a crisis hits.

<https://mindyourmind.ca/>

Remember to keep balance over the break!

Resources for Holiday Stress

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/parents-holiday.aspx>

<http://www.incredibleyears.com/parents-teachers/articles-for-parents/>

<https://mindyourmind.ca/wellness/coping-holidays-0>

<http://www.nctsn.org/resources/public-awareness/holiday-stress>

Phone Numbers:

- Call Health Link Alberta: 811
- CYFAMH Intake: 780-342-2701
- Youth Addiction Services Edmonton: 780-422-7383
- Mobile Response Team: 780-427-4491
- Call 211 – Alberta Community resources
- Catholic Social Services: (780) 432-1137
- The Support Network, Edmonton Distress Line: 780-482-HELP (4357)
- Kids Help Phone: 1 800 668 6868