3 Tips for Holiday Parenting

For many, the holidays are full of joy and stress. As parents, we often run around with thousands of tasks on our lists, juggling competing demands. It can sometimes feel like we are spinning in circles trying to create the best holiday experience for our kids, family, and self.

Adjust expectations: Take a minute to dream about your “perfect” holiday. Then dial it back. Dial it back again. And dial it back one more time. Adjust your expectations for how your kids will behave. There will likely be moments of whining, crying, and meltdowns as they are off routines, in different environments, and often more tired than normal.

Adjust your expectations about how your kids will react to special activities or gifts. We all have parenting moments where everyone seems excited, and then it just doesn’t work out. Kids’ reactions aren’t always what we expect, and it can be hard to embrace the fun part of the activities when one child isn’t fully enjoying it. Adjust your expectations for yourself. You are only one person with limited time and energy.

3 Tips for Holiday Parenting | Psychology Today
Tips for Parenting During the Holiday Craziness

**Pivot:** Sometimes, the plans just don’t work. Sick kid? Sick family member? Babysitter cancels? Giant ice storm? Toddler fell asleep at dinner? Teenager can’t deal with any more people? Family fight? Be open to changing your plans to make the holidays work the best for you and your family. You may not be able to make everyone happy. Keep in mind what’s best for your family. If you have to change your plans, give yourself and your kids time to adjust. There may be disappointments all around, or some family members might like the changes, and others might be upset about the changes.

“Joy comes when we go with the flow, and adopt a "do our best" attitude.”

**Grab onto Moments of Joy:**

This can be especially important when the day or holiday season isn’t going as hoped. Can you find a moment to sit in holiday peace? Enjoy holiday decorations? Savor the flavor of a traditional family recipe? Get a hug or snuggle from your child? Appreciate your child’s joy? Grab onto those moments. Instead of replaying having to throw out burnt cookies, replay the laughter and moments full of love.
Give The Gift of Acceptance

Change the way you think about the busyness of holidays-"chaos" becomes "unstructured," or "out of control" becomes "child-like fun." Parents win the stress war when their thoughts use neutral or happier words to describe holidays.

Accept the reality of holiday cheer-functioning (rather than stressing) during the holidays means accepting the variability of every moment. Part of the definition of holidays includes replacing routines with the joy of the unexpected. Try saying "If I accept that holidays are not predictable, then I can live in the joy of each moment as it unfolds." Parents find holiday joy by staying in the present.

Acceptance of childhood excitement-parenting during holidays requires embracing childhood enthusiasm. Parents find joy in sending accepting messages that validate children as overly-excited (rather than being "bad"), and empathize with a child’s feeling of raw energy. Parents help calm children through validation, so that limit setting becomes a lesson not a punishment. Tips for Holidays and Parenting: Letting Joy Win over Stress | Psychology
Healthy Nutrition

Tips for Healthy Holiday Eating for Kids (And Adults):

- Start the day with a healthy breakfast. An old adage “Breakfast is the most important meal of the day” remains true. Eating a protein-rich breakfast will greatly reduce unhealthy snacking in the evening.
- Offer fruits to children whenever sugar cravings arise. Keep the kitchen stocked with fruits. Eating fruits decreases sugar cravings and the fruits are a great source of fiber.
- Limit intake of sugary beverages, which add empty calories to diet and produces a breeding ground for cavities.
- Eat 4-5 small meals all day long and avoid grazing on processed sugary treats or fried foods.
- Ensure children physically exert themselves more than usual during the Winter break in order to counter extra calories from increased sugar consumption.

Tips to Keep Kids Healthy and Safe During The Holidays

Whether your family is traveling far or staying close to home over the holidays, parents have an important role in making this season safe and joyful for their children.

From picking age-appropriate toys to avoiding holiday hazards, parents please adhere to the following list of child-safety tips to make sure your kids stay happy and healthy this holiday season.

Holiday Safety Tips

What are general tips for keeping children healthy over the holidays?

- A flu shot and COVID-19 vaccine are key to keeping your kids healthy. You’ll also protect elderly relatives and other family and friends who may be especially vulnerable.
- Encourage handwashing and keep hand sanitizer in your purse, car and around the home.
- Keep your kids bundled up and warm in cold weather. Try to stick to a regular bedtime routine, so everyone gets a good night’s sleep.
- Go for moderation! Cake, candy and cookies are yummy, but encourage one serving instead of two, or a couple of cookies instead of five or six.
- Children ages 4 and younger are likely to put everything in the mouth. All toys and parts should be larger than your child’s mouth to avoid choking. Avoid stuffed animals with pellets, buttons or loose parts that can be swallowed.

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Newark Winter Village

Newark Winter Village has returned to Mulberry Commons Park. Now, in its fourth year, the event will run through Jan. 7 and features on-ice go-karting, an ice-skating rink and carnival games. Visitors also can rent a heated private igloo and enjoy food from local vendors.

For the 2023-2024 season, Newark Winter Village will be open from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m., Wednesdays to Fridays, and from 12 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays.

Admission is free, but reservations and tickets are required for ice skating, go-karting and igloo rentals. https://newarkwintervillage.com/

“Remember that the happiest people are not those getting more, but those giving more.”

Community Events & Resources
As part of his continued commitment to ensuring universal access to high-quality, full-day preschool throughout New Jersey, Governor Phil Murphy announced at the New Jersey Education Association Convention the awarding of $51.9 million in federal grant funding from the state to 23 school districts to support 30 projects that will enable the creation, expansion, and renovation of preschool facilities statewide.

One of the challenges that certain school districts have identified as an obstacle in establishing high-quality preschool has been a lack of adequate facilities. The Governor’s Fiscal Year 2023 budget included $120 million for grants for preschool facilities expansion, supported by federal American Rescue Plan Act dollars – marking the first time that preschool facility expansion grants were available to Regular Operating Districts.

“This funding will enable more districts to expand their capacity to offer full-day preschool programming to more students, building upon our efforts to provide every 3- and 4-year-old child in our state with access to high-quality pre-K,” said Governor Murphy. “Equitable access to early childhood education across the board is key to ensuring the long-term success of our children and our state as a whole. My Administration will continue to work toward bringing free, full-day pre-K to every district throughout New Jersey.”

High-quality, full-day preschool programs provide smaller class sizes inclusive of students with special needs and are led by a certified teacher and aide.

The 30 projects that have qualified for these preliminary grants had a total need of nearly $113.5 million in estimated project costs. Of that amount, the New Jersey Department of Education will cover approximately $51.9 million as the State’s share of preschool facilities in those districts; the State share is set at a minimum of 40 percent of the total estimated project costs.

A second round of funding may be announced at a later date with the remaining funding for preschool facility grants.