

Holidays Mean Different Things to Different People

Family is the most important and meaningful part of the holiday season.

Gifts and material things are for the moment, but caring is lasting.

Children are often the focus of our giving, but caring for ourselves, our children, our family and friends, is the best gift we can give them.

For a Maximum Amount of Pleasure And a Minimum amount of Stress

Plan Ahead:

Be aware of your energy, money and stamina, and spread them out through the holidays so that you have some of each left.

Cook ahead of time and freeze.

Don't shop when you are tired. This helps cut down on impulse buying.

Make arrangements to have your child(ren) cared for by a friend, provider and/or relative so that you can shop or have some time for yourself.

Shop by phone, mail, catalogue, or make gifts at home.

Don't Overdo Material Things:

Discuss the original meaning of the holiday with your children.

Let your children know what your values are, so that their expectations will be realistic.

Gift-giving can be a bottomless pit. Make a list and then cut that in half.

Emphasize the importance of people and not things.

Don't equate material gifts with love.

Keep Things Safe:

Check your tree, lights, candle and wiring.

Practice extra precaution when cooking or making crafts.

Take Care of Yourself:

Understand that holidays are a stressful time because of many unusual demands, especially if you are away from your family, or if you have large family gatherings.

Eat properly and rest. The temptation is to eat fast foods and sweet snacks.

Treat yourself well and your children will be well. Accidents happen more easily when you are tired or frustrated.

Don't try to be super-parent. If you do half of what you planned, you're probably doing too much.

“Deck the halls with boughs of holly
Fa la la la la la la
‘Tis the season to be jolly. . . .”

So go the words of a familiar tune which typifies the tones of excitement, which exists in the majority of homes of preschoolers at this season of the year. For each family there are special opportunities to highlight closer relationships, remembering that for little children the variety of symbols attached to the holidays are important chiefly as sensory experiences:

- . . . the smell of evergreens
- . . . kitchen smells
- . . . taste of the cookie frosting
- . . . the crackle of the fire
- . . . flicker of special candles
- . . . whispering which means secrets and surprises

Help toward understanding the meaning of the symbols in religious terms or historical terms may have to be delayed until the children are older, but the “here and now” experiences can be emotionally satisfying if adults can be sensitive to what is appropriate for little children.

As we live through the holidays with our children, let’s pause to think just how “jolly” we really are. Perhaps these few questions can help us all enjoy holiday living a bit more:

. . . what are our expectations of the preschool child when he “helps” us? When you bake cookies he is bound to reach into the dough and frosting. When you decorate the tree, fragile ornaments will get broken and lower branches will be over-laden. Can you enjoy the tree, because she helped in her own way, or are you tempted to make a more balanced arrangement when she isn’t looking? When he wraps packages, can you let them remain crude and accept the fact that he is using far too much tape?

. . . Can we keep in mind that “the simpler, the better” is a slogan which makes for pleasure for the young child?

. . . Are we planning too much, thus building up frustrations which make living with children harder rather than happier?

. . . Can we remember that the little child need not experience EVERYTHING this year?

. . . Can we appreciate that doing things himself is always more meaningful to the child than having everything done for him?

. . . Can we take time to enjoy and appreciate expressions on the child’s face as he has new experiences?