

10 TIPS FOR HELPING KIDS HAVE A GREAT HOLIDAY

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- 10 Make time for physical activity every day.** Chances are, your kids are used to at least a little physical activity every day—through sports, or even just recess. Often when school is out, relatives are over, it's cold outside, and it gets dark early, physical activity can decrease. Creating some unstructured time for kids to run around, be noisy, and work off pent up energy will decrease crankiness, boredom, and bad behavior throughout the day. And join in! It's good for you, too.
- 9 Create and honor your own family traditions.** Think back to your own childhood and the holidays. There were likely traditions or rituals that you loved—that made it feel like the holidays. These things are important to making the time and the memories special. They can also strengthen your family's sense of closeness. With your kids, you can certainly create new and different traditions from the ones you grew up with, but make a point have a few special things you do together every year.
- 8 Keep an eye on sugar intake.** You don't have to take all the treats and fun out of the holidays, but many kids are particularly sensitive to sugar. It can make them over-energized, and can make it much more difficult for them to regulate their behavior. In addition to being bad for your teeth and health in general, too much sugar can create highs and crashes of mood in many people as well.
- 7 Teach your kids the joy of giving, not just getting.** This can be through an overt conversation, or more subtle, depending on the age and personality of your child. Modeling is an indirect way: remember out loud how good it felt to give someone a meaningful gift, and why. Also, you can help your child identify and capture these feelings in themselves. If they have done something particularly kind, helpful, or generous, you can complement them on it. As them how they feel. With acknowledgement, the feeling can become its own reward.
- 6 Don't lose all routines.** Some degree of routine helps children know what to expect and what is expected of them. This, in turn, helps reduce stress for everyone. For most, the winter holidays mean a week or more out of school. For many, it means travel to someone else's home. Keeping some of their usual routines, appropriate for their age, can help you all feel a little more grounded.
- 5 Teach your kids to remember others in need.** Most communities, schools, and churches have activities around the holidays in which kids and families can help others. This may be through coat, food, or toy donations, or can also be making time to pay a visit to someone who may be lonely and crave the gift of a warm conversation. This type of action, when done mindfully, can help your child to develop a sense of community, responsibility, and value. Participate as a family and let it be part of your holiday tradition.
- 4 Kids still need to sleep (and so do parents).** Sure, you may not need to keep them to their usual 8:00pm bedtime for the entire break, but try to make sure your kids get adequate sleep, which will help avoid exhaustion-induced meltdowns. It can also help them (you) transition better back into their school routine when the holidays are over.
- 3 Practice mindfulness and gratitude, and teach your kids to do the same.** It's easy to get swept away by the excesses of the holidays. This may be food, presents, house guests, or activities. It can be easy to lose sight of the deep joy of togetherness in the hustle and bustle. Take time to notice moments of love and joy. Point them out to your children, and then reminisce about them later. This will help you all capture and keep those sweet moments and memories.
- 2 Take care of yourself.** If you're stressed out, it will very likely pass on to your kids. It's ok not to be perfect. It's ok to say no to some invitations, projects, outings, or decorating extravaganzas. Choose to put your heart into doing the things you and your family really enjoy. It's not just better for you—it's better for your kids, too.
- 1 Have fun! Enjoy yourself! Enjoy your kids.** This year will never come again!