

The Parent's Corner

🎁 We're in Your Corner 🎁

No matter what December holiday you celebrate, the holiday season should be about fun and enjoying family, but the constant hustle and bustle can be stressful for both kids and adults. There are so many stressors that can pop up around the holidays—all the excitement and anticipation, busy schedules, a different set of expectations, lack of outlets to let off all of that energy, changes in routines, and sleep disturbances. The holidays can be hectic, turning this “fun” time of year into an overwhelming experience.

Remember, **all behavior is communication**. If your child is feeling stressed during the holiday season, you may notice some symptoms: irritability, clinginess, more crying or whining, sleep troubles, headaches and stomachaches, shutting down or refusing to participate in activities.

This is where you come in. Your child isn't *giving* you a hard time, they are *having* a hard time. When it comes down to it, the more we can regulate our child's environment, the more we can help them regulate their moods. As with so many situations, the way parents handle something sets the tone for how their kids will. To minimize anxiety in children during the holidays, take steps to do some self-reflection on how *you* are doing. If you're busy and anxious about everything you have to do, you may notice that your kids are also a bit out of sorts. Not to add yet another thing to your list, *but here's a good place to start a new checklist -- for yourself!*

- 1) **Routines + Schedules**. Routines are habitual, and because of this, they can bring comfort. As much as possible, stick to some familiar routines that are typical for your child. As much fun as holidays can be, they can also be overstimulating, and schedules fill quickly. Try to pace activities and events and provide your child with an idea of the schedule. Try to prioritize what works for your family and what doesn't. And don't be afraid to say no. Sometimes, less is more.
- 2) **Listen + empathize**. Kids will often act out before or instead of being able to articulate what is bothering them. If you notice a change in behavior, it can be a good time to connect and listen. Let your child know that they can vent if they need to and that you understand that things may feel chaotic and out of control.
- 3) **Practice**. Role play scenarios that may be causing you or your child stress. This is a good way to act out situations where you may have expectations of your kids, and they may have worries of the unknown. Through make-believe situations, you can practice problem-solving strategies, peaceful communication, and coping techniques with your kids when they are calm. Having those skills will help them when the stress runs high.

Give yourself permission to take some time to care for yourself! You'll feel so much more equipped and available to be calm for your kids. And remember to enjoy—the season will be over before you know it! Happy Holidays!

~If you continue to have concerns, contact your school counselor to make a plan for a success—they're full of ideas, and are always in your corner!~