

Helpful Tips for Reducing Holiday Stress

by Children and Family Services and the Incredible Years

Tip # 1 - PLAY PLAY PLAY! Remember your “presence” and 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. Ironically, this is the time of year when parents are the most preoccupied with preparations or involved with social activities outside the home.

Tip # 2 - Look for opportunities to praise! Notice any positive child behaviors and label them. 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!

Tip # 3 – Remember, when you are interacting together - be it playing a game, wrapping presents, cooking, doing laundry, or cleaning up – coach and praise your children, particularly for behaviors you want to see more of!. For example, “You are really helping just like a team. We are all working together. Holiday time is fun when we are together as a family.”

Tip # 4 – Remember that the holidays are a busy and sometimes hectic time of year. Schedules are less predictable too. Reduce your expectations for yourself, your family, your in-laws and your children. Remember most children are “wound up” at this time of year, and most parents get themselves too stressed! Don’t expect “best company behavior” or for things to be “perfect.” Expect relapses in your child and yourself – accept mistakes and try again.