

Holiday Stress and Children

by [John Riddle](#)

The holiday season is upon us, and for many people that means decorating the house, baking cookies and shopping at the mall. The sound of Christmas music can be heard everywhere you turn. But if you listen carefully, you'll hear more than just Bing Crosby dreaming of a white Christmas. Those other sounds you hear are children who are suffering from **stress** associated with the holiday season.

Families want their holidays to be special and happy for everyone, especially the children. But what many parents fail to remember is that the holiday season can be a time of hustle and bustle...and a never-ending whirlwind of stress for their children.

Think about it. Because children are especially vulnerable at this time of the year, it's important to remember that they need to find some time to relax and enjoy the most wonderful time of the year. But how can parents expect children to relax when they are running around like crazy, shopping, baking, decorating, and becoming stressed at the thought of blowing the holiday budget after just one trip to the mall.

You can help your children beat the holiday stress beast by following these tips:

- **Limit TV and video games** — It's very easy at this time of the year to allow the TV and video games to become the baby sitter. But children who are stressed need some type of physical activity or exercise.
- **Remember routines** — For parents of small children, this is especially good advice. During the holidays children will find their routines disrupted. They are often dragged along on shopping expeditions or taken to events over which they have no control. And when a routine is broken, stress can result.
- **Nutrition** — Ever notice the lines at the fast food restaurants as it gets closer to the holidays? They are getting longer because parents typically are too busy to go home and cook a nutritious meal. And factor in all of those sugary holiday treats, and you end up with a stressed out, hungry family. Plan at least one healthy meal as a family everyday. And don't forget to toss in a healthy snack while you're visiting the mall.
- **Family traditions** — Many people fail to underestimate how important traditions are to themselves and their children. Family traditions offer great comfort and security for children when everything in their lives is being disrupted by the holiday season. Perhaps your family would enjoy creating an Advent calendar together, or baking cookies and delivering them to a local nursing home or soup kitchen.
- **Attitude check** — Both children *and* their parents need to have an attitude check before the holiday season begins. Take a deep breath, and have everyone in the family pledge to make the holiday season a time of joy and peace. Remind everyone that with the right attitude, that goal can be met.
- **Rest and relaxation** — Everyone, especially children, needs to take a "time out" over the holiday season to rest and relax. For parents of younger children this is especially good advice, because a well-rested child will be much happier on a trip to the mall than one who is in desperate need of a nap. Schedule some R & R time for everyone in the family.
- **Laugh** — Laughter is still the best way to beat stress and change everyone's mood from bad to good. Take time to read the comics to your children, or find a holiday joke book with family humor at your bookstore or library.

The holiday season doesn't have to be a time of stress and exhaustion. Make sure you do your part to make the most wonderful time of the year live up to its reputation. You and your children will be glad you did.

