



The Family Resource Network

Holiday Survival Guide for Families

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Greetings!

This year's holiday season will require a little more thought than other years due to the health and safety restrictions of the pandemic, but it prompts all of us to find new creative ways to connect with family and friends. This may be the year to rethink how and what your family celebrates and maybe refocus on the true meaning behind the season and not the commercialism.

No matter what religious or ethnic background you have, during the November-January holiday season all have celebrations centered around family, family values, religion, relationships, light and food. Traditionally, they are jam-packed with shopping, running around and overscheduling yourself and your family; all things that put a burden on everyone, but most of all you. You strive for perfection from yourself and your family and the result is a lot of stress caused by unrealistic expectations. Guess what? Perfection is a myth! Some of our best holiday memories usually revolve around something that went wrong or was unexpected; like the year mom burnt the turkey or the one when the dog knocked the tree over.

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with some ways to avoid or reduce stress, simplify gift giving and avoid overspending while following the COVID-19 Health & Safety Guidelines from the CDC.

Something Positive

- **MELTDOWNS:** There won't be the usual shopping mall meltdowns from your kids because you're shopping online.
- No sensory overload from attending big public events.
- **STAY IN YOUR PAJAMAS:** All events are virtual; so, no arguing with family to get dressed to go out.
- **NO GATHERINGS:** You won't have to worry if your host will have food your kids will eat or stress over their behavior.

Want to slow things down?

Try lowering the lights and turning off the television. Lighting and visual stimulation have an effect on both children and adults. The lower the lights are, the lower the activity level.

Tips for Helping Your Family Cope with Holiday Stress

Stress is contagious! The American Psychology Association noted that 91% of children are aware of parent stress. This causes stress in the child, which in turn increases stress for the parents, other siblings and teachers. Break the stress cycle.

1. **SIMPLIFY:** Make a concerted effort to focus on the true meaning of the holiday season and not the commercialism. This will reduce stress and be good for your budget.
2. **EXPLAIN** to your children your traditions and beliefs and help them understand why these are important to you. For young children who aren't at the age where they can fully understand yet, you could read them a Christmas story that illustrates your beliefs and then reading it becomes a holiday tradition for your family.
3. **ASSURE** them that you love them all the time even when you're involved with another family member.
4. **SAFE PLACE:** Let your child know where they can go if they feel the need to be alone. It can be their bedroom or any unused small space. Example-the space under a table covered by a tablecloth, a tent made out of a blanket, a large cardboard box, etc. Remember-it has to be a physically safe place; so, nothing with a lock or a lid that

can fall on them. If there isn't a quiet place, give them access to a device with earphones so they can play music or stories for them.

5. **SPEND QUALITY TIME** with your children that doesn't involve anything holiday related; such as, a sport. That will also help them expend energy.
6. **REDUCE** sugar consumption.
7. **CREATIVE ACTIVITIES**: Keep them busy and out of mischief. They can make gifts to give or crafts to decorate your home. Doing it together makes it a fun family way to keep connected and create memories.
8. **KEEP TO A NORMAL SCHEDULE** as much as possible. Routine is comforting to children and adults.
9. **ASSIGN TASKS** to children. Making them a part of all the preparation increases their self-esteem, keeps them busy and reduces your workload. Resist the urge to "redo" their efforts.
10. **RELAXATION TECHNIQUES**: Teach the family some simple breathing exercises or ways to relax. Everyone will benefit.
11. **BUBBLE BATH**: Most kids love water and bubbles and even with all the splashing, it will calm them down enough to be able to sleep. It also works for adults.
12. **BEDTIME**: Let them read a book, listen to calming music, talk a while, etc.
13. **GET ORGANIZED**: So much stress happens due to circumstances caused by the lack of planning.

Simplify - Stop Holiday Greed

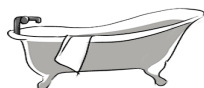
Ask a child and the notion of too many gifts isn't possible, but that can cause some emotional issues. If every year your children get piles of gifts, they start to expect it and become ungrateful when they don't receive as much. They'll start to judge people by the sorts of gifts they give-how big, how much. How does this align with the true meaning of the Holidays you're trying to teach them?

FAMILY MEETING: Set a time to get together and talk about the values you want your children to learn. Explain

Stress-Relieving Bath Crystals

(Makes a great gift also)

- * Mix two cups of Epsom salt
- * Add a few drops of your favorite fragrance
- * Add a few drops of food coloring
- * Optional: 1/2 tsp of glycerin
- * Store in an air-tight container.



how you feel about too many expensive gifts and your concerns. Ask them for feedback especially if you have older children. It can be a little difficult; so, take it slow and talk and listen.

Here are some suggestions for refocusing your holidays:

- * Talk to relatives and friends about how gift giving is getting a bit over-the-top. Suggest that they each buy just one gift for per child or buy something the whole family could use.
- * If you're still expecting too many gifts, before Christmas have your children go through their toys and put aside those they don't use any more or have out-grown. Have them select a local charity they could donate them to. Make them feel good about their decision to help another child.
- * After Christmas, sit down with them and have them write Thank You notes. It may seem old-fashioned, but it shows the giver that the children truly appreciated the gift and it's another opportunity for you to talk to them about giving and receiving and being thankful.

Get Organized

- ◆ **Create Your Gift List** of everyone you are giving gifts to.
- ◆ **Create a Gift List with your children** for people they need to give to.
- ◆ **Brainstorm** about their recipient's favorite things so you can use them for gift ideas.
- ◆ **Internet**: Use it to find bargains, save gas and time.
- ◆ **Delegate: Make a List of Chores**: It's Christmas for the entire family, not just you; so, get them involved. Your spouse/partner and older children can be assigned tasks. When assigning be clear about what they need to do. Write it down and break it down into steps or stages. Saying "clean the living room" will mean something different to them than to you. They will stack magazines when what you really wanted was vacuuming, dusting and putting toys and homework away.
- ◆ **Check Your List Often**: This will keep you on target.



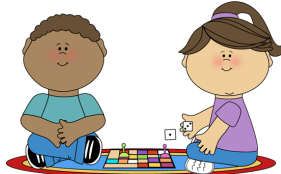
HOLIDAY FINANCES—Ways to Cut Your Holiday Expenses

When it comes to holiday spending, it needs to be part of a year-long budget you create.

1. **Before you make a list, plan.** How's your debt? Do you have an emergency fund, savings? Start by getting a handle on what you owe and what you're spending day-to-day. Then plan a holiday budget that allows you to spend wisely.
 2. **Determine what spending is really necessary.** It's tough to cut young kids off a gift list, so turn to the adults. If your finances are limited, it's worth asking adult friends and family members if they'd consider a gift swap or forego gifts altogether.
 3. **Attack your everyday expenses.** Consider evaluating some expensive habits. Reduce restaurants and take-out; cook at home. If working outside your home-make don't buy lunch, use public transportation. Compare auto and home insurance premiums. Turn down the thermostat, dump subscriptions, gym memberships and other items you're not using.
 4. **Browse before you buy.** Create a gift budget tracking precisely what you're willing to pay for every item. For must-have, non-negotiable gifts, wait for sales. Plan ahead and don't waver.
 5. **Create your own Holiday Club.** Online savings and money market accounts can allow you to set aside your holiday budget in small amounts throughout the year.
 6. **Watch gas and shipping.** Smart shoppers weigh the value of store trips versus online shopping. Make sure you review return policies at online and local stores before you buy. Paying return fees or missing a window to return a gift entirely can cost big money.
 7. **Keep good records.** Whether you track your finances on paper or on a computer, good recordkeeping allows you to track the numbers and prevents you from duplicating gifts or overspending year to year.
- Finally, consider whether it's worth creating new holiday traditions that go beyond gift giving. Some families consider contributing throughout the year to a joint vacation or reunion fund to bring everyone together. You might also consider the needs of aging or needy relatives who need assistance with chores, transportation or pet care. The holidays are what you make them.

Non-Toy Gifts for Children or Families During COVID-19 Pandemic

1. **Magazine subscriptions** – children's magazines are available for all ages.
2. **Dress up clothes** - Favorites - aprons, old shoes, feather boas, hats, old ball gowns, scrubs, etc.
3. **Their own travel supplies** – a toiletry bag for their stay at Grandma's house post-pandemic or a backpack with toiletries. This makes them feel grown-up and can decrease fear when the child has to stay away from home.
4. **Monthly mail** - kids love getting mail. As a gift if you live far away, make your gift to them a monthly postcard.
5. **A piggy bank** – can be used to teach budgeting and saving skills.
6. **Music** – language of the soul. Can stir the heart, soul and mind.
7. **Musical instruments** – can be small or large: maracas, rain-stick, small electronic keyboard.
8. **Audiobooks** – sometimes you just want to be read to.
9. **A photo album** – you can include a few pictures of them and you to get them started.
10. **1-on-1 outings** – give them a certificate or I.O.U. for an activity to do together when it's safe.
11. **Nature-up-close** – a bird feeder, butterfly house, bug house, ant farm, binoculars, telescope for observing nature.
12. Their own **kitchen tools** – to use when they help you cook.
13. Their own **outdoor tools or equipment** – fishing rod, gardening tools, workshop tools, hiking stick. They use them to foster independence and to imitate you, their role model.
14. **A watch** – child develops a sense of time and independence when the child can begin to know when an activity will occur.
15. **A calendar** – helps children connect to future events by providing a sense of long periods of time.
16. A fun or fancy **bath towel** – there are lots available: child can become a super hero or animal.
17. **A sleeping bag** – they can sleep in it, use it as a cave, a place to escape with a flashlight and/or book.
18. **Personalized recipe cards** + a special dinner cooking date – if your child likes to join you in the kitchen.
19. **A special article of clothing** – one you know the child will love and that they don't need. A fancy dress, piece of jewelry, scarf, tie-dyed T-shirt or something you wouldn't usually buy for them, but they really want.
20. **Art and craft supplies** – let them create! Fill a basket, box or container with the basics and others your child may not have used before. For older kids maybe a journal and colorful glitter pens.
21. **Homemade coupon book** – make a book of coupons the child can use anytime through the year for items like "stay up one hour past bedtime", "choosing the movie on family movie night", "scoop of ice cream".
22. **Game** – especially a non-video family game. Promotes family time.



Age-Appropriate Toys for Young Children

Good toys for young infants:

- * Things they can reach for, hold, suck on, shake, make noise with
- * Things to listen to - books with nursery rhymes and poems, and recordings of lullabies and simple songs
- * Things to look at - pictures of faces hung so baby can see them and unbreakable mirrors.

Toys for older infants - 7 to 12 Months:

- * Things to play pretend with - baby dolls, puppets, plastic and wood vehicles with wheels, and water toys
- * Things to drop and take out - plastic bowls, large beads, balls, and nesting toys
- * Things to build with - large soft blocks and wooden cubes
- * Things to use their large muscles with - large balls, push and pull toys, and low, soft things to crawl over

Toys for 1-year-olds:

- * Board books with simple illustrations or photographs of real objects
- * Recordings with songs, rhymes, simple stories, and pictures
- * Things to create with - wide non-toxic, washable markers, crayons, and large paper
- * Things to pretend with - toy phones, dolls and doll beds, baby carriages and strollers, dress-up accessories (scarves, purses), puppets,
- * Things to build with - cardboard and wood blocks (can be smaller than those used by infants - 2 to 4 inches)
- * Things for using their large and small muscles - puzzles, large pegboards, toys with parts that do things (dials, switches, knobs, lids), balls

Good toys for 2-year-olds:

- * Things for solving problems
- * Things for pretending and building
- * Things to create with Picture books with more details than books for young children
- * CD and DVD players with a variety of music (of course, phonograph players and cassette recorders work too!)

Good toys for 3- to 6-year-olds:

- * Things for solving problems
- * Things for pretending and building
- * Things to create
- * Things for using their large and small muscles
- * If a child has access to a computer: programs that are interactive (the child can do something) and that children can understand.

Gift Ideas for Both Children and Adults to Give

- ♦ Home-Made Gift Certificate - for a chore, an item, special day or event that the recipient could really use.
 - ♦ Certificate for shoveling their walkway/driveway, baking them cookies; doing their shopping.
 - ♦ If they're disabled or elderly, it could be for a ride to the doctor's or picking up prescriptions.
- ♦ Pictures - An especially good idea for grandparent gifts from children.
 - ♦ Use a recent photo and have the child make a frame for it or make it into an ornament.
 - ♦ Find 3 small boxes (3 or 4"). Cover with paper. On each side glue on a picture of the children or family or a mixture. Run a ribbon through all 3 boxes leaving enough at the top to make a loop for hanging
 - ♦ Gift Basket - Bowl - Decorated Box of their favorite cookies or snacks or Christmas cookies you and your child decorated. Making them with your child is an added bonus-homemade food is always welcome. If you want to add something else; maybe, a video or CD you got on sale that you know they'd like.
- ♦ You can stack 3 boxes of graduating sizes (filled with goodies) to make the head and body of a snowman or Santa Claus. You can cover the boxes with the appropriate color paper and add circles to make the snowman's eyes, mouth and buttons. Add a paper carrot for the nose; a hat and belt for Santa. Cookies in a Jar - The Internet is full of recipes/mixes for these. Add a festive ribbon and voila. Make extras to have on-hand in case someone unexpectedly gives you a gift and you want to reciprocate.
- ♦ Reusable Coffee Sleeves - Can easily be made from a sock, felt and fabric glue.
- ♦ Hand or Footprint Casts - You can make your own craft modeling clay or purchase a tub at a craft store. You/your child can cast a print for the other parent, grandparent, godparent, etc. It should have the year written on it and it can be decorated or painted with non-toxic paint.
- ♦ Make a painting of an angel using your child's hand and footprints. The foot (with toes facing downward) is the body

and the handprints with the thumbs facing downward are the wings. Add a circle for the head and a halo.

- ♦ Plates - Get a clear plastic gift bag and fill it with some festive paper plates, napkins and cups. Tie with a ribbon and the recipient can have a dishwashing-free meal.
- ♦ Kitchen Mitts - Buy kitchen mitts (try the Dollar Store or Christmas Tree Shop for a bargain). Using non-toxic, washable paint, have your child imprint and paint his/her hand onto each mitt. Paint/write the year on the thumb and "Helping hands" along the bottom edge.
- ♦ Candle Holder - Make a holder out of a clay flower pot and its clay dish. Paint each piece. Turn the pot upside down and glue the dish onto it. Decorate and add a candle.
- ♦ Applesauce-Cinnamon Ornaments (recipe included in this booklet) - give as ornaments or air fresheners.
- ♦ Try www.pinterest.com - there are more Do-It-Yourself crafts and ideas than you can imagine!

Recipes for some of these projects are at the end of this booklet

Holiday Safety Tips

As the holidays approach, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is urging people to look for and eliminate potential dangers from holiday lights and decorations that could lead to fires and injuries. Most holiday accidents are totally avoidable.

Each year, hospital emergency rooms treat about 8,700 people for injuries related to holiday lights, decorations and Christmas trees. In addition, Christmas trees are involved in about 400 fires annually. "Candle lighting ceremonies during Advent, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa are beautiful traditions," said CPSC Chairman Ann Brown. "But keep matches, lighters and candles away from children and never leave burning candles unattended. These simple safety tips will help prevent many of the 10,000 candle-related fires that occur each year."

TREES:

- * When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label "Fire Resistant".
- * When purchasing a live tree, check for freshness.
- * When setting up a tree at home, place it away from fireplaces and radiators.
- * Be sure to keep the tree stand filled with water.
- * Place the tree out of the way of traffic and do not block doorways.

LIGHTS:

- * Turn off all lights when you go to bed or leave the house. Lights could short out and start a fire.
- * Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed wires, or loose connections.
- * Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord.
- * Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged and a person electrocuted.
- * Before using lights outdoors, check labels to be sure they have been certified for outdoor use.
- * Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house walls, or other firm supports. Use only insulated staples to hold strings in place, not nails or tacks.
- * For added electric shock protection, plug outdoor electric lights and decorations into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs).

DECORATIONS:

- * Use only non-combustible or flame-resistant materials to trim a tree. Choose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or unleaded metals. Leaded materials are hazardous if ingested by children.
- * Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens.
- * In homes with small children, take special care to avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable, keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children to avoid the child swallowing or inhaling small pieces, and avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food that may tempt a child to eat them.
- * Wear gloves to avoid eye and skin irritation while decorating with spun glass "angel hair"

FIREPLACES:

- * Use care with "fire salts," which produce colored flames when thrown on wood fires. They contain heavy metals that can cause intense gastrointestinal irritation and vomiting if eaten. Keep them away from children.
- * Do not burn wrapping papers in the fireplace. A flash fire may result.

Gifts to Make

CANDY WREATH FOR GIFT

(Ideal craft for school-age children)

This can be made with almost any individually wrapped candy.
Use sugar-free candy for a recipient with diabetes.

- 1 small wire wreath (available in any craft store)
- 4 lbs. individually wrapped peppermint candy
- Florist wire (available in any craft store)

Start by fastening the florist wire to the wreath. Use 2 candies and fasten them to the wreath by twining the wire around one candy end. Let the next ones overlap the old ones. Work your way all around. Fasten the last ones by twining the wire a few extra turns around the wreath. Add a bow.

BASIC SUGAR COOKIES (makes about 30)

- 1 stick salted butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 large egg
- 2 cups plain flour
- 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

In a large bowl, beat the butter and sugar until light and creamy. Add the egg and beat well into the mixture. Add flour, baking powder and vanilla and mix until combined. Wrap in plastic and refrigerate for at least 2 hours before use. Roll out to 1/8 inch thickness on a floured surface. Cut out cookies and transfer to a parchment-paper-covered baking tray. Bake for about 8-10 minutes or until just golden. Cool on wire rack. Store in an airtight container.

COOKIES IN A JAR

Death By Chocolate Cookies

- 2 cups chocolate chips
 - 3/4 cup brown sugar; firmly packed
 - 1/2 cup flour
 - 1/4 tsp baking powder
 - 1 1/2 -2 cups nuts, chopped
- Place 1 cup semi sweet chocolate chips in a baggie, seal. Mix flour and baking powder. Layer brown sugar, flour, unwrapped chips, nuts, and wrapped chips in a one quart jar. Cover jar.

LABEL TO ATTACH TO JAR

Death by Chocolate Cookies

- 1/4 cup butter
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Heat oven to 350. Remove bag of chips from jar. Microwave on med high heat 2-3 minutes, stir until melted and smooth. Add butter, eggs and vanilla. Empty contents of jar into a large bowl, stir to blend. Add melted mixture. Stir to combine. Drop 1/4 cupful onto ungreased cookie sheet. Bake 12 to 13 minutes, until cookies are puffed and feel set to the touch. Cool on cookie sheet 1 minute. Transfer to wire rack to cool completely. Makes about 18 cookies.

APPLESAUCE-CINNAMON ORNAMENTS

- 2 lbs. cinnamon
- 70 oz. jar applesauce
- 4 oz. Elmer's glue

Place cinnamon in large bowl. Add glue and gradually add enough applesauce to get a slightly firm dough. Roll out to 3/8" to 1/2". Cut out with cookie cutters. Use a straw to make a hole in top of ornament for ribbon. Let dry at room temperature or bake at 200 degrees for 1 hour and then let dry completely.



GINGERBREAD PLAYDOUGH RECIPE

Ingredients:

- 2 cups plain flour (all purpose)
 - 1 cup salt
 - 2 tablespoons oil
 - 2 tablespoons cream of tartar
 - 1.5 cups of boiling water
 - 1 tablespoon ground ginger
 - 2 tablespoons ground cinnamon
- (optional addition) 5 drops of glycerin for extra shine!

Method:

Mix all of the dry ingredients into a bowl. Add the oil. Stir in the boiling water and allow to cool briefly. Knead it into a workable dough on a floured surface using your hands. After a few minutes it should be soft and smooth and none should come off on your fingers. If it's still a little sticky then add more flour, one tablespoon at a time until it's just right!

Pinterest.com

You can find instructions to make any low-cost thing you want at this website.
It's a perfect way to start to minimize the amount of money you spend for gifts all year around!

Winter Survival Kit

In a Mason Jar



- ~Socks
- ~Texting or regular gloves
- ~hand lotion
- ~hand sanitizer
- ~chapstick
- ~salted caramel hot chocolate mix (found at Target)

Place everything in a jar and add this gift tag you create.

You're the Sweetest



Fill a Mason Jar with the recipient's favorite candy.

Quick bread in a bottle

Chocolate Chip Oatmeal Quick Bread



Cool weather puts us in the mood to bake. So why not give a friend a head start? Layer the dry ingredients from step 1 (below) for this easy quick bread into a milk bottle or 1-quart mason jar. To fit, tamp each layer well (with chips and nuts on top). Then all that's left is to add the wet ingredients and bake. We used craft paper adhered with double-stick tape to cover the original milk bottle graphics and the lid. Add a label on the back of the bottle for the recipe instructions. The mix keeps for two to three months at room temperature.

Label with Instructions For Recipient

Chocolate Chip Oatmeal Quick Bread

1. In a large bowl, mix the contents of this bottle: 2 cups all-purpose flour, 1 cup rolled oats, 1/2 cup granulated sugar, 1/2 cup brown sugar, 2 teaspoons baking powder, 1 teaspoon baking soda, 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1/2 cup chopped walnuts, and 1/2 cup miniature chocolate chips.
2. In a small bowl, beat 1 1/2 cups buttermilk, 2 large eggs, and 1/4 cup melted butter.
3. Stir wet mixture into dry ingredients just until evenly moistened (batter will be lumpy).
4. Scrape into a buttered and floured 9- by 5-inch loaf pan (with a 9-cup capacity), and bake in a 350° oven until a wooden skewer inserted in the center comes out clean, about 50 minutes.




Gift Certificate

This certificate entitles: _____

To: _____

From _____ Expires: _____






Gift Certificate

This certificate entitles: _____

To: _____

From _____ Expires: _____





Gift Certificate

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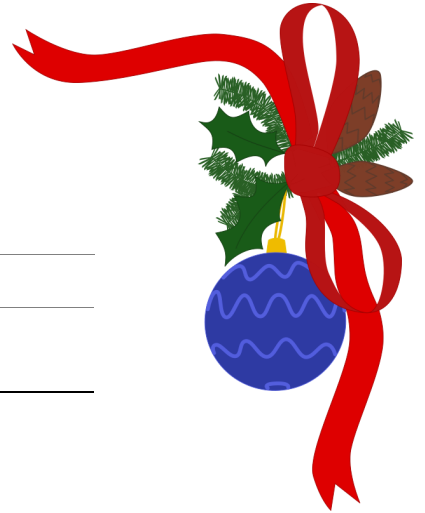


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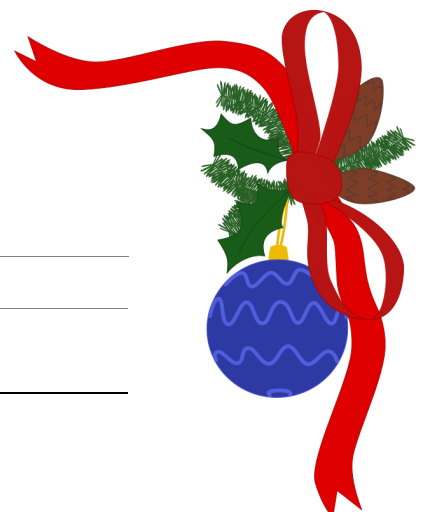


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