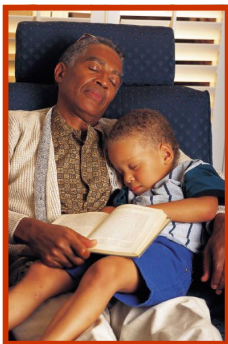
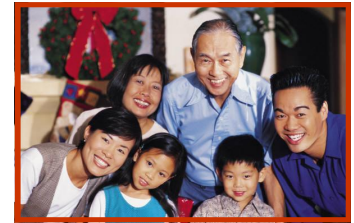


20 Ways To De-Stress Your Holiday

Prevent Child Abuse Illinois

It has been said and it has even been sung, that the holiday season is the most wonderful time of the year! While that may be true, no matter what holiday your family celebrates, this time of year can also be one of the most stressful. Here are 20 ways to help de-stress your holidays. Many of these suggestions can help you and your family survive not only the holidays but everyday!

1. Stay organized. Make a list or create a calendar of things to do or things that need to be done.
2. Simplify! Simplify decorations, simplify gifts, and simplify gatherings.
3. Teach children that the holidays are about giving from the heart and not about giving from your wallet or their piggy bank.
4. Be creative. Creativity helps reduce stress. Personalize holiday gifts by making something or offering a service such as babysitting, house cleaning or yard work.
5. Create and stick to a budget so you can feel good about the amount of money you end up spending.
6. Laugh more, laugh often and build memories!
7. Repeat something you did last year that everyone enjoyed so you can start to build a family tradition.
8. Make sure to practice good nutrition, for you and your children, and get plenty of sleep.
9. Begin a family tradition this year of giving back to your community. Donate toys or other items, visit a nursing home, volunteer at an animal shelter, food pantry, local charity or other worthwhile organization.
10. Change your expectations about the holidays such as finding the perfect gift, planning the perfect family get together or serving the perfect holiday meal. Ask for and accept help from others. Have fun and let go of "perfect."
11. Baking as a family activity can be very fun and rewarding. When baking with children pre-measure ingredients and put everything at their level. Covering the area with newspaper or a sheet can make for easy, fast clean up.
12. It can be stressful to think about all of the things you want to give your family but can't. Practice gratitude by being thankful for what you do have. Make a list of 10 things for which you are truly grateful.
13. Be realistic with your time and energy and say "no" where you can.
14. Establish a special place you can go if you feel overwhelmed or out of control.
15. Make sure to give yourself time to relax. Expect stores and restaurants to be crowded and have long lines. Use the time you spend waiting to practice deep breathing and letting go of stress.
16. Recognize and help your children cope with stress. Do not expect too much or more from children during the holidays. No matter what age, excitement and stress can leave you tired and cranky.
17. Spend quiet time with your children talking about your beliefs, your memories and traditions growing up, and your values.
18. Remember, all things in moderation, doing too much, buying too much, eating and drinking too much will add to your stress.
19. Dealing with difficult relatives at holiday time can be very stressful. Don't expect they've changed. Plan ahead, know what to expect, and limit your time with them. Changing your attitude can help you cope.
20. Most importantly, be able to recognize the signs of stress, know how to reduce stress and do something about it.



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