



Strategies for Challenging Holiday Situations

Holiday excitement and routine changes can be very difficult for children. This article focuses on three challenging areas families face during the holidays: giving and receiving gifts, managing holiday excitement, and understanding schedule changes.

1. Gift Giving and Receiving – The excitement of getting gifts can be overwhelming for children. Help them understand polite giving and receiving of gifts with these strategies.

Involve Children in Giving – Let children help pick out and wrap gifts. By participating in the gift giving process, children become interested in seeing other people's reaction to the gift. Even young children can choose between two gifts, put a bow or tape on the wrapping paper, and decide where the gift should go under the tree.

Practice Receiving – Role play receiving a gift and thanking someone for it. Make writing thank you cards part of your family routine so children understand how to thank people politely for presents.

2. Holiday Energy – Holiday events often mean sweet foods and late bedtimes. Use the strategies below to manage energy levels and make bedtime successful.

Keep Children Active – Sledding, walking, and playing games outside during the day can help children use their energy in a healthy and positive way. Keep children active during the day so they will be tired at night making bedtime easier.

Limit Sweets – Candy, cookies, and soda are prevalent during the holidays. These foods are high in sugar and caffeine. They cause children to be overly active and make falling asleep difficult. Set rules about how much and when these foods can be consumed and provide healthy alternatives.

Stay on a Sleep Schedule – Even when children are not in school, a consistent sleep schedule is important. Have children wake up and go to bed at a regular time. Plan morning events such as holiday shopping to motivate children to wake up and get ready for the day.

3. Holiday Schedule Changes – Many children benefit from consistent routines and have difficulty with change. Make holiday schedule changes less stressful with these simple tips.

Use Visuals – Have a holiday calendar that lists events in writing, drawing, or picture format depending on the child's level. Refer to the calendar to prepare children for the day's events and help them understand what is going on and when.

Involve Children – Let children add new events to the calendar. If there are important events the family must attend, explain why attending is important. If there are events that are debatable, include children's input in decisions about attending the event.

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