

Tips for parents on managing holiday stress

A 2008 holiday stress poll by the APA showed that more than eight out of 10 Americans anticipate stress during the holiday season. In particular, the holidays can be a stressful time for parents, especially if you're wondering where to get the money to buy holiday gifts. Households with children were more likely to report anticipating stress during the holidays than those without, and one-third expected stress due to pressure to buy gifts or because of too many things to do. Additionally, [APA's 2010 Stress in America](#) survey found that 76 percent of Americans report money as a significant source of stress.

Heightened stress during the holidays can lead to unhealthy stress management behaviors, such as overeating and drinking to excess. People tend to reduce their stress in ways they have learned over the course of time because they turn to what they know. You may take comfort in unhealthy stress management techniques because they're familiar, even though they're not good for your health. But, there are other behaviors you can learn to further relieve stress and its effects that may be both healthier for you and longer lasting.

Here are some tips to help parents deal with holiday stress and build resilience:

Set expectations. Talk to your kids about expectations for gifts and holiday activities. Be open with them if money is an issue. Depending on a child's age, parents can use this as an opportunity to teach their kids about the value of money and responsible spending. And be realistic. Take small concrete steps to deal with holiday tasks instead of overwhelming yourself with goals that are too far reaching for a busy time.

Keep things in perspective. Try to consider stressful situations in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective. Avoid blowing events out of proportion. And teach your kids how to keep things in perspective, including what type of and the number of gifts they receive.

Make connections. Good relationships with family and friends are important. So, view the holidays as a time to reconnect with people. Additionally, accepting help and support from those who care about you can help alleviate stress. Even volunteering at a local charity with your kids is a good way to connect with others, assist someone in need and teach your kids about the value of helping others.

Take care of yourself. Pay attention to your own needs and feelings during the holiday season. Engage in activities that you and your family enjoy and find relaxing. Taking care of yourself helps keep your mind and body healthy and primed to deal with stressful situations. Consider cutting back television viewing for kids and instead, get the family out together. It promotes activity and takes kids away from sedentary time and possible influence from advertisements.

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