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HOLIDAY DE-STRESS KIT:

A Parent's Guide to Navigating
Emotional Ups and Downs



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PREPARING FOR A PEACEFUL HOLIDAY SEASON

Why Emotional Well-being Matters for the Whole Family





The holiday season is a joyful time for many families, but for others, it can bring unique emotional challenges. Children may experience heightened stress, changes in routine, and sensory overload that can lead to meltdowns. As parents, understanding these potential stressors can help you proactively create a holiday experience that supports your child's emotional well-being and keeps the season peaceful for the whole family.

The holiday season is often filled with family gatherings, special events, and traditions that bring joy and connection. But for many children, especially those prone to emotional dysregulation, these seasonal changes can also introduce stress and anxiety. Children may struggle with the disruptions to their routines, sensory overload, or expectations to interact with extended family. This section will guide you through simple strategies to prepare for a more peaceful holiday season, ensuring that you and your family feel supported every step of the way.

WHY EMOTIONAL PREPARATION MATTERS



Taking a few moments to plan ahead can make a big difference in creating a positive holiday experience. Preparation allows you to reduce stress, anticipate challenges, and create a calm environment that benefits the entire family. By addressing potential triggers in advance, you can reduce meltdowns and help your child feel more secure during this busy time.

Parenting isn't about achieving holiday perfection; it's about embracing the moments that bring us together.

BENEFITS OF EMOTIONAL PREPARATION



**Reduces
anxiety**



**Promotes a
peaceful
environment**



**Encourages
empathy and
connection**

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD'S TRIGGERS

Each child has unique responses to the holidays, and understanding what might cause them stress is an important first step. By observing past reactions or discussing potential events with your child, you can gain insights into their holiday triggers. Here are some common holiday stressors:



Sensory Overload: The lights, sounds, crowds, and scents of the season can be overwhelming for children sensitive to sensory input.



Disruption to Routine: Traveling, staying up late, and attending events can disrupt familiar schedules, making it challenging for children to feel grounded.



Social Expectations: The pressure to interact with relatives or participate in group activities can induce anxiety, especially for children who are shy or struggle with social cues..

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“As we prepare for the holiday season, remember: it's okay if everything isn't perfect. What matters most is creating a space where everyone feels calm and included.”



HOW TO PREPARE FOR A PEACEFUL SEASON

Preparation is key to helping your child navigate the holidays with ease. Here are some proactive strategies to consider:

1

DISCUSS THE HOLIDAY SCHEDULE TOGETHER

Involve your child in planning the holiday activities. Let them know what to expect, which events they'll attend, and who they'll meet. This discussion can alleviate the anxiety of the unknown. If possible, give them choices about certain activities to help them feel more in control.

CREATE A CALM, "SAFE ZONE"

2

Designate a space where your child can go to decompress during gatherings or events. This could be a quiet room, a designated corner with familiar toys, or even an outdoor spot where they can take a break. A "safe zone" provides a predictable, calming space for your child to retreat to when things feel overwhelming.

3

PREPARE FOR SENSORY OVERLOAD

Bring items that can help manage sensory input, such as noise-canceling headphones, sunglasses, or a small toy for fidgeting. Small adjustments like these can make overwhelming environments more manageable.

ALLOW FOR FLEXIBLE EXPECTATIONS

4

Holidays can be unpredictable. Give yourself and your child the freedom to adapt. If your child needs a break or isn't feeling up for a specific activity, know that it's okay to change plans. Flexibility can reduce pressure and make the experience more enjoyable for everyone.

UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONAL DYSREGULATION AND COMMON HOLIDAY TRIGGERS

Recognizing Signs of Stress and Overwhelm in Children



WHAT IS EMOTIONAL DYSREGULATION?

Emotional dysregulation is the inability to manage emotional responses, which often results in intense reactions. This response is common among children who are still learning to self-regulate and may feel overwhelmed by certain situations.

EXAMPLES OF DYSREGULATED BEHAVIOR:



Intense emotional outbursts over seemingly minor issues.



Difficulty transitioning between activities, especially if unexpected



Sensitivity to sensory input, leading to overstimulation and meltdowns



Physical symptoms such as fidgeting, restlessness, or impulsivity





Holidays are filled with excitement, but they can also bring new and unfamiliar challenges for children, leading to heightened emotions and stress. By understanding these potential triggers, you can better support your child's unique needs during this busy season.

For many children, the holidays introduce a mix of excitement, overstimulation, and changes in routine that can lead to emotional dysregulation. Emotional dysregulation is when a child struggles to manage their emotions in response to stressors or unexpected changes. By recognizing the triggers that may affect your child, you can take proactive steps to minimize their impact and create a more enjoyable holiday experience.



COMMON HOLIDAY TRIGGERS FOR EMOTIONAL DYSREGULATION

Understanding what might cause stress for your child during the holidays can help you prevent or minimize emotional outbursts. Here are a few triggers to watch for, with examples and tips to help manage them:



SENSORY OVERLOAD

Example: You're at a holiday party, and the room is filled with loud music, bustling people, and flashing holiday lights. Your child starts covering their ears, squinting, or getting fidgety. They might complain of headaches, feel suddenly irritable, or even retreat to a quieter area.

TIP:

Before entering a potentially overstimulating environment, create a "sensory game plan." .ore entering a potentially overstimulating environment, create a "sensory game plan." . Let your child know it's okay to take breaks if they feel overwhelmed. Bring tools like noise-canceling headphones, sunglasses for bright lights, or a small comfort item they can hold. If possible, identify a quiet area they can go to if things feel too intense, and walk through it together when you arrive.

DISRUPTION TO ROUTINE

Example: Your child is used to a structured bedtime and a quiet evening routine. During the holidays, however, bedtimes might get pushed back, and meals may become irregular with all the festivities. This sudden lack of routine can make your child feel anxious, and you might notice signs of tiredness or resistance.



3

SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS

Example: Family gatherings often mean greeting relatives, making conversation, or even hugging family members they don't know well. Your child may feel uneasy, withdraw, or even become visibly distressed in social situations, especially if pressured to engage in ways they aren't comfortable with.



TIP:

Talk to your child beforehand about who will be at the gathering and what they might expect in terms of social interactions. Let them know it's okay to say "hello" or wave instead of hugging if that feels more comfortable. You could also introduce a "social signal" they can use with you if they need a break from interactions. Practice responses or phrases together to help them feel more prepared, like "It's nice to see you" or "I'd like a little quiet time."

EMOTIONAL INTENSITY AND PRESSURE

Example: With an emphasis on joy, gratitude, and gift-giving, children may feel pressure to be "on their best behavior" or to feel grateful and happy, even if they're feeling overwhelmed. They may also experience disappointment if their gift expectations aren't met or if events don't go as they hoped.



TIP:

Acknowledge that it's okay to feel a range of emotions during the holidays, including stress or disappointment. Set realistic expectations around gift-giving and holiday events by having open conversations about what they can anticipate. Reinforce that the holiday isn't about perfection, and encourage them to express how they feel. If disappointment occurs, take a moment to validate their feelings by saying something like, "It's okay to feel a little let down. Let's talk about it together."



TIPS FOR RECOGNIZING AND ADDRESSING TRIGGERS

Helping your child recognize and manage holiday triggers can empower them to feel more secure and in control. By identifying specific stressors together and preparing for them, you can reduce the intensity of emotional responses and create a more peaceful environment. Here are some detailed strategies to try:



IDENTIFY TRIGGERS TOGETHER

Involve Your Child in a Conversation: Begin by reflecting on past holiday experiences with your child. Ask open-ended questions to understand what they remember as stressful or overwhelming. For example, “Do you remember anything that made you feel anxious last holiday?” or “What part of the holidays do you enjoy the most?”

Highlight Positive Experiences: Recognizing positive moments alongside challenging ones can help your child feel more optimistic about the season and make the conversation feel less daunting.

Create a “Trigger Checklist”: Make a simple list of potential stressors (such as loud noises, crowded spaces, or social interactions). Let your child review and check off the items they think might be challenging, or even add their own. This checklist can serve as a reference for you both to revisit throughout the season.



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The best way to support your child is to see the world through their eyes, especially during moments that feel overwhelming.



WATCH FOR EARLY SIGNS

- **Observe Body Language and Behavior:** Pay attention to subtle shifts in your child's body language, as these are often the first indicators of stress. Signs like fidgeting, avoiding eye contact, becoming unusually quiet, or clinging to you can signal discomfort.
- **Recognize Physical Cues of Dysregulation:** Dysregulated children often exhibit physical cues, such as tense shoulders, clenched fists, or pacing. Noticing these cues early can give you time to gently intervene or redirect before emotions escalate.
- **Create a 'Check-In' Routine:** Periodically check in with your child during holiday events by simply asking, "How are you feeling right now?" or "Would you like a quiet moment?" This lets your child know they can share their feelings openly and builds a habit of self-awareness.



PRACTICE CALMING TECHNIQUES TOGETHER

- **Teach Grounding Exercises:** Grounding exercises, like the "5-4-3-2-1" technique, can be helpful for calming nerves in the moment. Encourage your child to name five things they can see, four they can touch, three they can hear, two they can smell, and one they can taste. This helps shift their focus to the present moment and reduce overwhelm.
- **Deep Breathing Techniques:** Practice simple deep breathing exercises with your child. Try "Belly Breathing," where they place a hand on their stomach, breathe in deeply for a count of four, hold for two, and then exhale for a count of four. Practicing this beforehand can make it feel natural to use in stressful moments.
- **Create a Personal "Calm Kit":** Prepare a small kit with sensory items your child finds soothing, like a soft toy, a fidget spinner, or scented lotion. Encourage your child to use these items when they're feeling overwhelmed. Having familiar comfort items nearby can provide a sense of security.





DEVELOP A SIMPLE "EXIT PLAN" FOR OVERWHELMING SITUATIONS

- **Discuss Safe Words or Signals:** Establish a special word or signal (such as tugging on your hand) that your child can use to communicate when they need a break. This allows them to express their feelings discreetly and take control of the situation.
- **Plan Quick Getaways:** If you're at a crowded gathering or event, identify an area nearby where you can go if your child needs to calm down. Knowing there's a quiet spot available can provide a sense of relief.
- **Encourage Self-Compassion:** Let your child know that it's okay to feel overwhelmed and need a break. Remind them that they aren't alone in their feelings and that taking time to feel calm is a positive choice.



CELEBRATE SMALL WINS

- **Acknowledge Effort and Progress:** Each time your child successfully manages a stressful moment, take a moment to recognize their effort. For example, say, "I noticed you took some deep breaths when things got loud. That was really brave of you!"
- **Reflect Together:** After a challenging situation, ask your child what helped them feel calm. This reflection reinforces effective coping strategies and makes them feel capable.
- **Create a "Holiday Wins" Board:** Use a small board or chart to celebrate moments when your child manages a holiday stressor well. Each "win" can be a sticker or small drawing. This visual record can boost their confidence and make the season feel more positive.



KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR PARENTS



Observe and Identify:

Pay attention to your child's unique stressors during the holidays.



Prepare Calming Strategies:

Equip your child with simple calming techniques to manage emotions.



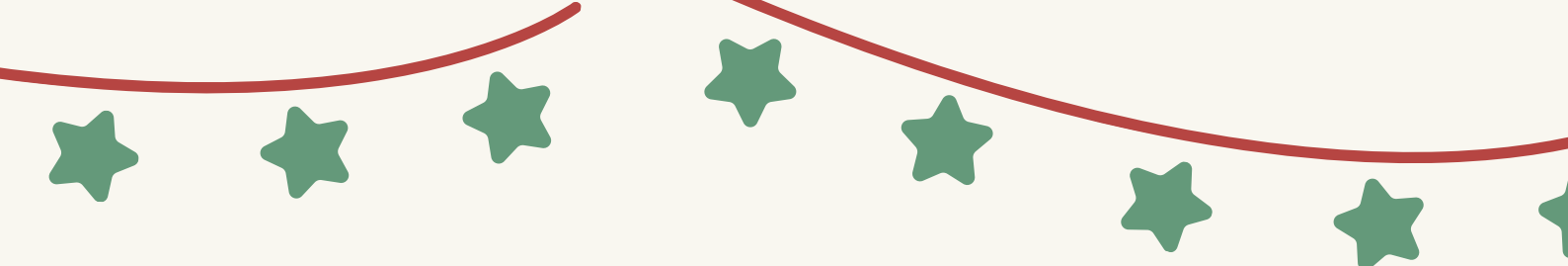
Be Understanding:

Recognize that these reactions are a normal part of emotional growth and can be managed with empathy and support.



HANDLING MELTDOWNS AND TANTRUMS DURING THE HOLIDAYS





Even with the best preparation and awareness of potential triggers, emotional outbursts can still occur. Meltdowns and tantrums are a normal part of childhood, especially during the holiday season, which can bring added excitement, anticipation, and stress. By staying calm and present, you can guide your child through these challenging moments and help them feel secure.

Picture this: It's the middle of a family holiday gathering. You've planned for weeks, anticipated every possible trigger, and packed all the essentials to keep things calm—noise-canceling headphones, a favorite snack, even that special comfort toy. But then, in the blink of an eye, it happens. Your child reaches their limit, and suddenly you're in the middle of a full-blown meltdown, surrounded by well-meaning but watchful family members. Your heart races, and you feel the tension rise. It's not about all the preparation you did—it's about handling what's right in front of you now."

We've all been there. Despite the best-laid plans, holiday meltdowns are a reality of childhood. The season's excitement, the new faces, the noise and bustle—these can be overwhelming for even the most well-prepared child. When these moments happen, the best thing we can offer is calmness, presence, and empathy. By managing our own emotions and gently guiding our child through their big feelings, we create a secure, supportive space where they feel safe to work through their emotions.

In the previous section, we covered strategies to recognize and manage holiday triggers, but even with preparation, meltdowns may still occur. This section offers tips to help you stay calm, self-regulate, and use simple, effective techniques to guide your child back to a more regulated state.





STAY CALM AND PRESENT

When a meltdown begins, it's natural to feel a surge of emotions yourself—stress, frustration, or even helplessness. In these moments, staying calm and present can make a significant difference for both you and your child. By centering yourself first, you model the calm response you'd like to share with them. This section provides strategies to help you regulate your own emotions so you can offer your child a sense of stability and reassurance.

1

PAUSE AND BREATHE FIRST - DO A PERSONAL "RESET":

Meltdowns can be intense for both children and parents. When your child is in the middle of an emotional outburst, it's natural to feel stress or even frustration yourself. Before responding, take a few deep breaths to center yourself. Remind yourself that your calmness can have a soothing effect on your child. When you take a second to "reset" yourself, you are better equipped to respond rather than react to your child's meltdowns.

2

REASSURE WITHOUT RUSHING:

Children pick up on their parents' emotional cues. Let your child know that you're there for them, but don't pressure them to stop or "get over" their feelings quickly. Phrases like, "It's okay, I'm here with you," or "Take your time, I'll be here when you're ready," can create a comforting presence.

3

MANAGE YOUR INNER DIALOGUE:

Often, witnessing a child's meltdown can bring up feelings of embarrassment or self-doubt, especially in public settings. Remind yourself that meltdowns are a normal part of childhood and that your role is to support your child, not control their emotions. This mindset shift can help you stay calm and compassionate.

4

ALLOW FOR FLEXIBLE EXPECTATIONS

Designate a space where your child can go to decompress during gatherings or events. This could be a quiet room, a designated corner with familiar toys, or even an outdoor spot where they can take a break. A "safe zone" provides a predictable, calming space for your child to retreat to when things feel overwhelming.



USING CALMING TECHNIQUES

Once you've centered yourself, guiding your child through calming techniques can be a gentle way to help them return to a more balanced state. Calming exercises, like breathing or grounding activities, give children the tools to manage their emotions and regain a sense of control. This section offers simple, effective techniques you can use together, helping your child learn to navigate strong emotions with confidence.



SIMPLE BREATHING EXERCISES:



Belly Breathing:

Guide your child to place their hand on their stomach and take a deep breath in through the nose, feeling their belly expand like a balloon. Then, exhale slowly through the mouth, feeling the belly deflate. Demonstrating and doing this together can help you both calm down.



Square Breathing:

Describe this breathing technique as “drawing a square in your mind.” Inhale for a count of four as you imagine drawing the first side, hold the breath for four as you draw the second, exhale for four as you draw the third, and hold for four to complete the square. This structured approach gives your child something to focus on.



Five Finger Breathing:

Ask your child to hold one hand up and use the other to trace each finger while taking five slow deep breaths. This technique engages several senses simultaneously.



2

GROUNDING TECHNIQUES

5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Exercise:

This classic technique can help both you and your child feel more centered. Ask your child to look around and name:

- 5 things they can **see**
- 4 things they can **touch**
- 3 things they can **hear**
- 2 things they can **smell**

1 thing they can taste This exercise encourages mindfulness and distraction from overwhelming emotions, helping the child reconnect with the present moment.

“My Safe Place” Visualization:

If your child feels comfortable with visualization, guide them to imagine a safe, calming place, like their room, a favorite park, or even a cozy blanket fort. Encourage them to picture themselves there, imagining the sounds, smells, and sights. This exercise can redirect their focus and bring comfort.

Touch Grass:

When your child is overstimulated and emotionally out of reach, simply getting them outside can have an immediate calming effect. Even better, having them put their bare toes in the grass and notice how it feels. Getting outside helps all of us with emotion regulation.



“As we prepare for the holiday season, remember: it’s okay if everything isn’t perfect. What matters most is creating a space where everyone feels calm and included.”

3

RECONNECT AND REASSURE AFTER THE MELTDOWN

Once a meltdown has passed and your child is calmer, it's a great opportunity to reconnect and provide reassurance. This quiet, reflective time allows you to reinforce their sense of safety and help them understand that big feelings are okay. By acknowledging what they experienced, discussing what helped, and reminding them of your support, you can strengthen your bond and empower them to handle emotions more confidently in the future.



Acknowledge Their Feelings

Starting Phrases:

- *"That was a really big feeling you had, wasn't it?"*
- *"I can see that you were feeling (name the emotion if you can) very strongly."*
- *"Thank you for letting me help you while you were feeling so (angry, sad, overwhelmed)."*

Guide:

Use neutral, non-judgmental language to validate your child's experience without assigning blame or labeling their emotions as "bad." Acknowledging their feelings helps them feel heard and understood, making it easier for them to share openly with you in the future.



Discuss What Helped

Starting Phrases:

- *"When we took some deep breaths together, did that help you feel a bit better?"*
- *"Did holding my hand help when you were feeling overwhelmed?"*
- *"Was there something else that helped you calm down?"*

Guide:

Gently explore what techniques or actions helped them during the meltdown. Focus on reinforcing positive techniques that worked, such as breathing exercises or a quiet space, which can increase their comfort with using these strategies in future situations. If they can't articulate what helped, that's okay; you can simply praise them for trying different things to feel better.





REMIND THEM OF YOUR SUPPORT AND OF THEIR BOUNDARIES



Starting Phrases:

- "It's okay to have big feelings. I'll always be here to help you through them."
- "I'm proud of you for working through that big feeling. I'm here to help whenever you need."
- "No matter what you're feeling, you can always talk to me about it."
- "It's ok to have big feelings, but it's not ok to (insert negative behavioral choice). What can you do instead the next time you feel (insert feeling)?"

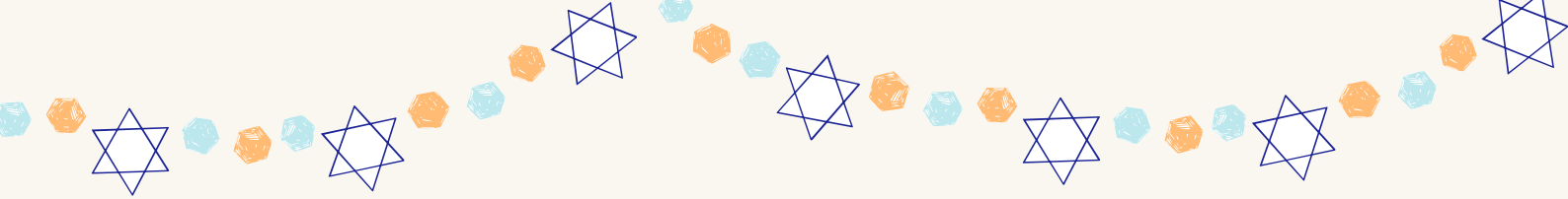
Guide:

Reassure your child that experiencing strong emotions is a normal part of growing up and that they're never alone in handling them. Reinforcing your availability and support helps build trust, so your child feels comfortable seeking your help with emotions in the future. Setting clear boundaries about what behaviors are safe and acceptable also binds your child's distress, allowing them to feel that you can help them handle their big emotions.



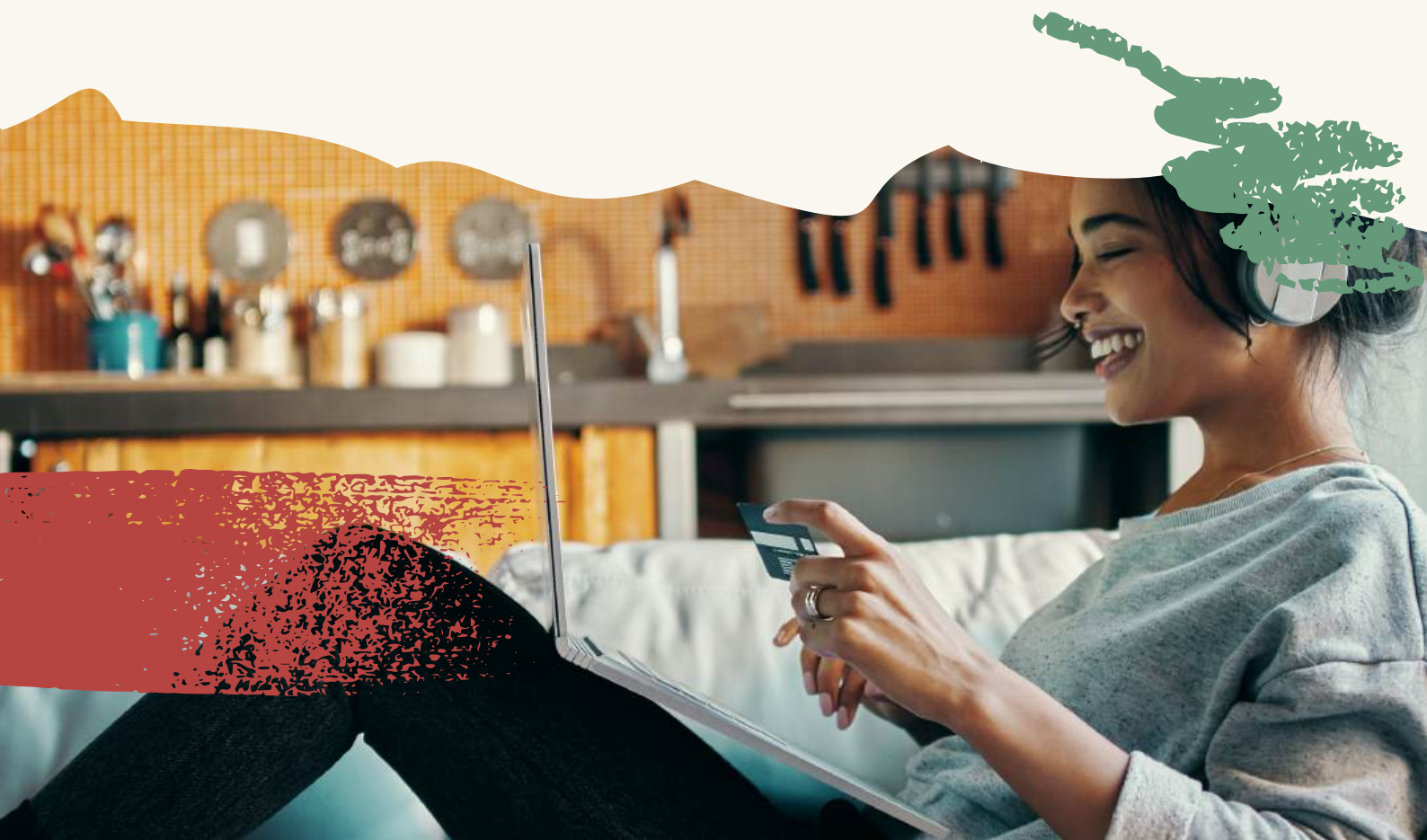


**TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF
SO YOU CAN TAKE CARE OF
YOUR CHILD**



The holiday season is a time of celebration, togetherness, and special moments, but for many parents, it also brings added responsibilities and demands. As you focus on creating a joyful season for your family, it's common to feel stretched thin, juggling holiday plans, family traditions, and your children's unique needs. Amid the busyness, it's easy to set aside your own well-being. However, taking time for yourself isn't just a luxury; it's essential.

When parents prioritize their own self-care, they build the resilience and calm needed to support their children through the ups and downs of the holiday season. A few moments of intentional self-care can help you manage stress, stay grounded, and enjoy the season with your family. This section provides simple strategies to find your own calm amidst holiday chaos and create a self-care plan that fits into even the busiest days. By nurturing yourself, you'll be better prepared to create a peaceful, connected holiday experience for everyone.



FINDING YOUR CALM AMIDST HOLIDAY CHAOS

When the holiday season ramps up, it's natural to feel moments of stress or overwhelm—whether from managing packed schedules, juggling family commitments, or handling the unique demands that come with holiday gatherings. In these times, taking small moments to find your own calm can make a significant difference for you and your family. By centering yourself and prioritizing your well-being, you create a steady, grounded presence that helps set a peaceful tone for everyone around you.



PERSONAL REFLECTION

Take a moment to think about what helps you feel centered and recharged. Reflect on past holiday seasons and note what made you feel good versus what added stress.

SET BOUNDARIES

This season, give yourself permission to say no to activities or commitments that feel overwhelming. Remember, choosing a few meaningful events over many can make the holidays more enjoyable for you and your family.



CREATE MINI MOMENTS OF CALM

Look for small, achievable ways to incorporate moments of calm into your day. This could mean starting your morning with a quiet cup of coffee, taking a short walk outside, or even practicing a 5-minute mindfulness exercise.





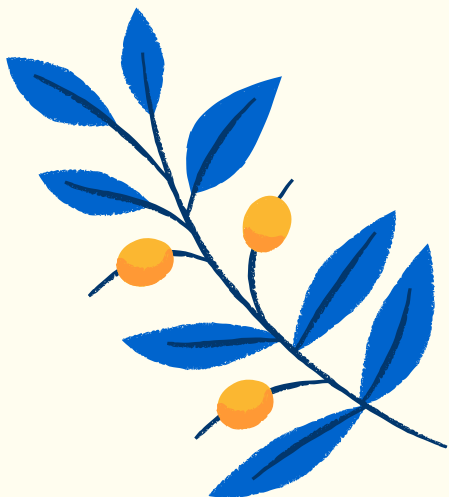
BE SELECTIVE WITH FAMILY ADVICE

It's easy to get embarrassed by your child's poor behaviors when you are spending time with friends and family, especially if they don't see your child often.

During your child's meltdowns or poor behaviors, remember **that you are the expert in your own child.**

Let family members help when you know that they support your parenting practices. For those who give unsolicited and unhelpful advice, a simple "Thank you, but I've got it", could be the best response you can give.

Remember, the goal of the holidays is not to please everyone or make a good impression, it is to celebrate time with loved ones, even when this includes meltdowns and tantrums.



CREATING A SELF-CARE PLAN

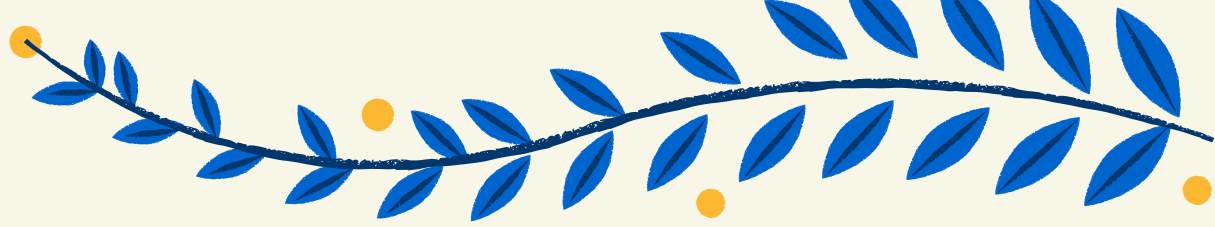
Creating a self-care plan doesn't have to be complex or time-consuming. A simple checklist or table can help you identify and track small, manageable activities that support your well-being. Here's a sample self-care checklist with ideas to get you started.

Activity	Frequency	Notes/Reflection
Take 5 minutes for deep breathing	Daily	Use the 4-7-8 breathing technique to reset and relax.
Enjoy a quiet morning coffee or tea	Daily	Start the day with a mindful moment, just for you.
Set aside 10 minutes for stretching	3x per week	Relieve physical tension by moving and stretching.
Limit screen time before bed	Daily	Create a calming bedtime routine to improve sleep.
Spend time outdoors (even briefly)	Daily	Breathe fresh air, even if it's just a quick walk.
Journal or reflect on your day	2-3x per week	Write down thoughts, stresses, and moments of gratitude.
Listen to a favorite song or podcast	Weekly	Give yourself a mental break by enjoying something uplifting.
Connect with a friend or loved one	Weekly	Reach out for support or just to enjoy a conversation
Set boundaries on commitments	As needed	Politely decline extra events that feel overwhelming.
Engage in physical exercise	3-4x per week	Exercise has proven mental

HELPFUL EXTRAS FOR A STRESS-FREE HOLIDAY

The holiday season is full of excitement, but it can also bring stress and sensory overload, both for children and parents. Small tools and resources can go a long way in helping your family feel more prepared, supported, and calm. This section offers some practical extras, including a holiday planner, a daily feelings chart, and a sensory kit checklist. These resources are designed to help you plan, track, and support your family's well-being, making it easier to manage holiday stress and enjoy the season together.





HOLIDAY PLANNER TEMPLATE

The holiday season often comes with a packed schedule of gatherings, activities, and errands. Organizing these plans can help reduce last-minute stress and create a more relaxed, enjoyable holiday experience. This holiday planner template is a tool to map out your family's schedule, identify any potential stress points, and incorporate moments of calm throughout the season.

DATE	EVENT OR ACTIVITY	LOCATION	TIME	POTENTIAL STRESS POINTS	CALMING PLAN
Dec, 20	Family Gathering	Grandma's House	3:00 PM	Loud environment, unfamiliar relatives	Bring headphones, create exit plan

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE PLANNER





























































- **Fill Out Key Details:** For each major event, note the date, location, and time to keep the schedule organized.
- **Identify Potential Stress Points:** Think about aspects of each event that might be challenging for your child (or yourself), such as large crowds, loud music, or unfamiliar settings.
- **Create a Calming Plan:** For each potential stressor, add a calming plan to address it. For example, bring a sensory kit, find a quiet area for breaks, or set up a signal to leave early if needed.

This planner helps you anticipate holiday stressors, empowering you to manage them proactively and create a smoother experience for everyone.



FEELINGS CHART

Children often feel a wide range of emotions during the holidays. A feelings chart gives them a way to identify and express these emotions, which can help them feel more understood and supported. This printable chart allows children to check in with their feelings each day, fostering self-awareness and making it easier for you to understand their needs."

DATE	HOW I FEEL TODAY	FEELING CHOICE	ANTHING ELSE I WANT TO SHARE?
Dec, 20	Happy but nervous	           	I'm a little nervous about the party with people I don't know.
		           	
		           	
		           	
		           	

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE FEELINGS CHART

- **Daily Check-In:** Invite your child to check in with their emotions each day by writing how they feel or circling an emoji that best represents their mood.
- **Encourage Sharing:** Use the “Anything Else I Want to Share” column as a space for your child to write or draw anything specific about their day, such as a worry, excitement, or memory.
- **Use as a Conversation Starter:** Review the chart together to start open conversations about feelings. Acknowledge and validate their emotions to help them feel understood and supported.



SENSORY KIT CHECKLIST

Holiday environments are often bustling with lights, sounds, and activity, which can be overwhelming for children who are sensitive to sensory input. A sensory kit provides your child with tools to help manage sensory overload and self-soothe in stimulating environments. Use this checklist to assemble a personalized holiday sensory kit.

ITEM	PURPOSE	PACK?
Noise Canceling Headphones	Reduces loud, overwhelming noises	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sunglasses	Helps with bright holiday lights	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fidget or Stressball	Provides tactile stimulation for calming	<input type="checkbox"/>
favorite small toy or comfort item	offers familiar comforting presence	<input type="checkbox"/>
scented lotion or essential oils	calming scent for sensory grounding	<input type="checkbox"/>
small blanket or soft fabric	provides tactile comfort and warmth	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chewy Snack	Can provide oral sensory stimulation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water Bottle	Keeps Hydrated and provides soothing action	<input type="checkbox"/>





ENDING THE SEASON WITH GRATITUDE





As the holiday season winds down, it's a wonderful time to pause, celebrate the efforts you and your child have made, and reflect on the moments that brought connection and growth.

Acknowledging the small wins, the resilience you've both shown, and the ways you navigated challenges can foster a sense of accomplishment.

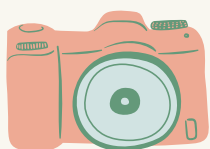
Looking forward to the new year with renewed peace, you and your child can carry forward what you've learned, making future experiences even more enjoyable. This final section encourages you to celebrate the season's progress and look ahead with hope and confidence.



CELEBRATING SMALL WINS

Holiday seasons are filled with countless small moments that reflect the growth and effort both you and your child have put in. Celebrating these small wins—whether it's a moment of calm in a busy setting, a successful coping strategy, or even a meltdown handled with empathy—acknowledges the progress made along the way. This approach shifts focus from perfection to progress, fostering a sense of pride and resilience in both you and your child.

HOW TO CELEBRATE SMALL WINS



Create a 'Holiday Highlights' List:

Reflect with your child on moments that went well over the season. These could include times when they used a calming tool, managed a social interaction, or enjoyed an event they were once hesitant about. Writing these highlights down or discussing them can be a heartwarming way to see all you've achieved together.



Acknowledge Efforts, Not Just Outcomes:

Celebrate the attempts made, regardless of the outcome. A phrase like, "I saw how hard you tried to use your breathing exercises" or "You were really brave to speak up when you felt overwhelmed" can encourage your child to keep practicing these skills in the future.



Create a Small Wins Jar:

Throughout the holiday season, drop notes in a jar every time you notice a small victory. At the end of the season, read them together to celebrate the progress and strength shown. This can be a fun, visual way to capture accomplishments both big and small.

These simple actions help reinforce positive memories and build confidence, making both you and your child more prepared to face future challenges with resilience and self-assurance.





LOOKING FORWARD TO THE NEW YEAR WITH PEACE

The holiday season can be an intense period, but it also brings valuable lessons that both parents and children can carry forward. With each season, the understanding of what works best for managing emotions grows, leading to a more peaceful approach in the future. Embracing the new year as a time of renewal allows you to set intentions based on what you've learned and make plans to continue supporting each other's well-being.

HOW TO LOOK FORWARD WITH PEACE:



Set Intentions for the New Year:

Rather than resolutions, focus on intentions that emphasize kindness and patience, both for yourself and your child. For example, "This year, I will remember to take breaks when I feel overwhelmed" or "We'll practice gratitude for each other's efforts." Setting these gentle goals provides a positive outlook for the months ahead.



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THANK YOU & HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Thank You for Reading the Holiday Toolkit!

I hope this guide has provided valuable insights and strategies to help you navigate the emotional ups and downs of the holiday season with confidence and calm. As you continue your journey, we invite you to stay connected and explore additional resources:

- **Sign Up for Supportive Emails**
 - Receive practical tips, resources, and updates tailored to parents like you. **Sign up here.**
- **Join Parent Support Groups**
 - Connect with other parents in workshops designed to provide guidance and community. Learn more about our offerings: **Parent Workshops.**
- **Explore Parent Coaching**
 - Looking for personalized strategies to support your family? Reach out to discuss one-on-one coaching options that meet your unique needs. Contact Us.

You're Not Alone.

Parenting through the holidays—and every season—comes with challenges and rewards. Let us support you in creating moments of connection and resilience for your family. Wishing you a peaceful and joyful holiday season,

Dr. Jill Thurber



