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# Jingle Less, Joy More

A Stress-Busting Guide to Happy Holidays for Parents & Families

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Image Credit: Canva

The holiday season is right around the corner, and while the mood is filled with excitement and anticipation for families across the world, this season can also bring a host of stressors for families. It is not easy balancing the festive celebrations, end of the year deadlines, and children's holiday performances with the high expectations for having the "picture perfect" holiday. Be it getting "perfect" gifts for loved ones and trying to deal with financial pressures that come from holiday shopping or taking a family photo to send holiday cards out to friends and family or finding child care when your children are home from school or day care over winter break, there are lots of sources of stress and potential family conflict during the holiday season! Amidst the chaos, it's essential to remember that children pick up on the energy around them, making it crucial for

parents to maintain a sense of calm, routine, and balance. Here are four stress-busting tips to help ensure your family can experience more joy this holiday season!



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## How Do I Manage it All?

*1. Prioritize and Plan Ahead:* Rather than attempting to do it all, consider planning ahead and prioritizing activities. Focusing on what matters most can alleviate the pressure of trying to meet every demand, allowing you to savor the moments that truly count. If your family is invited to 2-3 events in one weekend, consider only going to one or divide and conquer and send one caregiver to each event, and politely decline the third invitation.

*2. Set Boundaries:* Learn to say no to invitations, especially those involving triggering individuals or situations. Setting clear boundaries is crucial for maintaining your mental well-being and ensuring a positive holiday experience for you and your immediate family. If you know there is a person at an event that is likely to be problematic, come up with a plan to remove yourself from the situation before you get there.

*3. Establish a Financial Budget:* Develop a realistic financial budget and communicate expectations to avoid unnecessary stress. Whether it's deciding on a gift limit or opting for a gift-free

celebration, open communication helps create a financially stress-free holiday season. You don't want to start the new year with debt due to present purchases.

*4. Maintain Self-Care Habits:* Amid the festivities, don't neglect your exercise and sleep routines. Changes in schedules, especially when children are home from school, can disrupt habits. However, prioritizing self-care through regular exercise and adequate and consistent sleep can significantly reduce stress, anxiety, and enhance overall mood and attention.



### ***But Most Importantly...***

It's important to not give into the pressure to meet unrealistic expectations, especially when it comes to gift-giving. Prioritize experiences and traditions over extravagant gifts to create beautiful lasting memories for your children. Avoid the temptation to compare your holiday celebrations to others on social media or in movies, as genuine connections and meaningful experiences often outweigh material possessions.



If it ever starts to feel like too much or you start to fall back into old habits here are some other tips and resources you can use:

### Resources for Families:

- Embrace virtual celebrations to stay connected with friends and loved ones remotely, utilizing video calls, group texts, or online activities.
- Cultivate connections with chosen family if you feel disconnected from your biological family.
- Limit exposure to social media and overly idealized holiday movies that can contribute to unrealistic expectations.
- Seek support from a therapist if coping with loss or dealing with triggering situations during the holidays. Regular sessions can help rehearse coping strategies and assertiveness in setting boundaries.

Remember, the holiday season is about creating cherished moments and connections, so don't let stress overshadow the joy that this time of year can bring!

**Are you a parent of child age 2-12 years with behavioral concerns? Would you like to learn strategies to help improve your child's behaviors and better manage your parenting stress?**

**The Virginia Tech Child Study Center and Virginia Tech Autism Clinic & Center for Autism Research, in partnership with the University of Virginia and Virginia Commonwealth University, are now recruiting for a study that will take place in spring and summer 2024, which seek to assess the feasibility, acceptability, and benefit of the Treks App used in combination with clinician-delivered behavioral therapy as part of a stepped-care model for reducing child behavior problems and increasing parents' feelings of competency in supporting youth behavior. Parents will be compensated up to \$75 for completing all parts of the study. If you would like to learn more about the study, please contact us at [vtautismcenter@vt.edu](mailto:vtautismcenter@vt.edu) or 540-231-8747.**

To read more about this and other current research studies at the Child Study Center, please visit: <https://childstudycenter.wixsite.com/childstudycenter/current-research-studies>

### **Have a child between 2-12 years?**

**CONCERNED ABOUT THEM DISPLAYING BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS SUCH AS HYPERACTIVITY, TANTRUMS, NON-COMPLIANCE, AGGRESSION, OR RESISTANCE TO CHANGE?**

**Consider enrolling in our new**


### Consider enrolling in our new research study (IRB #23-261)

This study will assess the feasibility, acceptability, and benefit of the Treks App used in combination with clinician-delivered behavioral therapy as part of a stepped-care model for reducing child behavior problems and increasing parents' feelings of competency in supporting youth behavior.

#### The Details

- ➔ Treks includes instructional videos, strategies to attempt, options of activities to try, and reinforcement for effort through daily parent lessons provided over a course of 28 days
- ➔ Each Treks lesson covers psycho-education about parenting and evidence-based principles for alleviating behavioral problems, such as the ABCs of behavior, use of reinforcement, and prevention strategies.
- ➔ The clinician-delivered behavioral therapy teaches parents ways to change their child's behavior by using positive reinforcement to decrease unwanted behaviors and promote adaptive and desired behaviors.
- ➔ Complete ratings on parenting behaviors and child behavioral difficulties on two occasions
- ➔ Compensated up to \$75 for completing all parts of the study



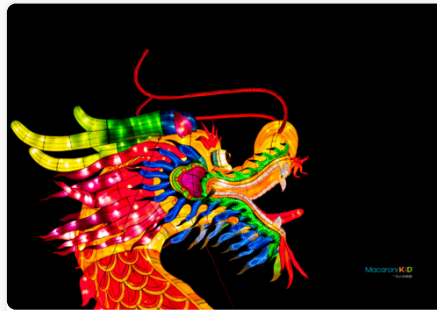
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