

Presence for the Holidays

Handout

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- **What is your favorite holiday time memory from your childhood?**

Objectives

- The difference between “wants” and “needs”
- The importance of adults spending time with children AND children spending time with adults
- 3 ways to become the parent you most want to be
- Definition of *affluenza* and the potential negative consequences of overindulgence and the absence of realistic limits
- How to create new meaning for children outside the frenzy of commercialized gift-giving

Parents (and parent figures) matter!

Research documents that family relationships matter

- 1) Children with positive caring relationships with their parents are more likely to avoid risks and develop positively
- 2) Positive and supportive relationships with caring adults are critical to child and youth development
- 3) There are a wide variety of benefits *to adults* of positive relationships with their children

Many social factors effect children's development

The family needs to play a role in balancing and fostering the positive, as well as counteracting the potential negative influences of peers, schools, neighborhood, extended family, & media.

Holidays are Opportunities

Holidays and other special events provide unique and intense opportunities for family connection(s), a veritable "Kodak moment" of heart and soul

Social Forces

A variety of social and cultural forces – especially media and business – create a consumer culture that emphasizes the value of objects rather than relationships

Wants versus Needs

The differences between *wants* and *needs* can become confused and the words are sometimes used interchangeably.

All children have three categories of *needs**:

- 1) SURVIVING
- 2) BELONGING
- 3) THRIVING

* based on the National Elementary School Center's *Framework of Children's Needs* (1993)

Your Children Want and Need You

- At the same time, the qualities that children say they *want* in a parent is also what they *need*.
- TA DA! The qualities children desire from their parent(s) coincide with the qualities parents say they want to cultivate AND that child development experts say children need to flourish.

These Qualities Include:

1. BEING THERE

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| 2. Taking your children as seriously as they take themselves | 10. Demonstrating a sense of humor |
| 3. Being a passionate advocate | 11. Conveying hope |
| 4. Showing love & affection | 12. Being consistent |
| 5. Providing security & protection | 13. Remembering what it was like to be a kid |
| 6. Trusting & having faith in your children | 14. Admitting mistakes and not trying to be perfect |
| 7. Setting clear, consistent & firm limits | 15. Permitting children to make their own mistakes |
| 8. Accepting children as the individuals they are | 16. Being flexible |
| 9. Respecting children's right to an opinion | 17. Not arguing with your parenting partner in front of your children |

What Kids Want Most:

- *Being There, REALLY being present, is the parental quality kids most desire – as a “former kid” you know that.*
- **Shifting the culture and habits in a family from giving presents to *being present* is not easy; you should begin with small steps and ask each family member how each would like to define and spend the gift of presence.**

Parenting Resources:

There are 3 key sources for becoming the parent *you* want to be:

1. Gathering information from *others* (“experts”, friends, other parents);
2. *Yourself* (utilizing your own *life experiences*, remembering what it was like for you as a child); and,
3. *Your child* (observing and interacting with your child)

“Affluenza”

Be aware of the temptations and risks of substituting presents for presence and the symptoms of *affluenza*

Remember the words of Dr. Seuss in his 1990 *Oh, the Places You’ll Go!*

*You have brains in your head.
You have feet in your shoes.
You can steer yourself
Any direction you choose.
You’re on your own. And you know what you know.
And YOU are the guy who’ll decide where to go.*

Thank You

- Please complete the evaluation form provided, your input is appreciated

Holiday Travel Tips

Hectic holidays can be merry and bright with these practical ideas.
By Karin A. Bilich

Traveling by Plane

The holiday season will still be the most popular time of year for people to visit family and friends. This can also be the most stressful time of year to travel -- there's traffic, overcrowding, and weather delays. Here are some travel tips that will help keep your holidays hassle-free.

- 1. Avoid flights with connections or stops.** This time of year, bad weather can cause flight delays and cancellations. The fewer flights you've booked, the less likely you'll get held up.
- 2. Call before leaving for the airport.** Even if the weather is fine where you are, it may not be as good at your destination city. With the numerous delays and cancellations of the last few months, it's best to find out when your flight is scheduled to depart before going to the airport.
- 3. Get a ride to the airport.** Parking lots may be full, so consider using public transportation or having a friend drop you off.
- 4. Arrive at the airport early.** Holiday crowds coupled with current security measures may increase the time you need to check in. Build even more time into your schedule if you're traveling with a baby.
- 5. Don't leave a car unattended in front of the terminal.** Because of increased security, local parking rules are being strictly enforced.
- 6. Leave presents unwrapped.** Both carry-on and checked bags are subject to search, so leave gifts unwrapped until after you arrive at your destination. If airline security personnel cannot determine by x-ray the contents of a package, they can and will open it, or ask you to open it, for inspection.

Traveling by Car

- 1. Have your car checked.** This is no time for car trouble. With so many cars on the road and the prospect of bad weather, it would be especially difficult to deal with unexpected repairs. Make sure that your car is running well before leaving on your trip.
- 2. Avoid traveling on Christmas Eve.** The traffic on the day before Christmas can be brutal. If possible, leave the day before or very early Christmas morning.
- 3. Travel during daylight hours.** You may not know the roads to your destination as well as you think. Driving during the day will decrease the likelihood of getting in an accident.
- 4. Allow yourself plenty of time to get to your destination.** You'll generally be traveling at a slower speed than normal throughout the holidays. Plan your trip accordingly.
- 5. Check the weather forecast.** Find out if you'll be hitting any snow or ice on your way. If the weather is treacherous, you may want to rethink the timing of your trip.
- 6. Bring equipment for bad weather.** Even if the weather is okay when you're leaving, it might not be so when you're coming home. Pack your trunk with all the equipment you might need if you unexpectedly hit snow or ice.
- 7. Avoid driving on New Year's Eve.** New Year's Eve is one of the most dangerous nights of the year on the road. The percentage of drivers who have been drinking is much higher than the norm. If you must drive on New Year's Eve, be extra cautious.

Sources: *Federal Aviation Administration; National Highway Traffic Safety Administration; University of Oklahoma Police Notebook*

4 Tips for Stress-Free Holiday Travel

How to take the hassle out of your holiday vacation

By Laura Sullivan, *Parenting*

Taking a real vacation around the holidays can be wonderful...or a stress-fest. To make it less aack! and more aah:

Let Them Help: "Moms take on the burden of all the planning," says Samantha Brown, host of *Great Weekends* on the Travel Channel. She says that as soon as kids can talk, they can tell you what they want out of a vacation. (Yes, "I want to play princess!" is a valid wish.) The older they get, the more fact-finding they can do. Ask your tweens (and younger kids, teamed up with your husband) to plan activities, pick a restaurant, decide between the scenic route and the fast way. The more involved they are, the more they'll get out of the trip. Just keep in mind that if the kids are tired, nobody's happy, so follow Brown's rule: Plan only one thing per day.

Time It Right: Got preschoolers? Find the school calendar on your district's website, and travel when class is in session to dodge the holiday crush. And book the first flight of the day. It's almost never delayed because the plane has been at the gate all night.

Make the Wait Great: A secret weapon for the flight or car is free storybook podcasts from iTunes. For two kids, try a headphone-jack splitter, about \$5 at electronics stores.

Though it may seem counter-intuitive, don't eat before you leave for the airport. Surveying all the different options and then sitting down for a meal will occupy them for a good 45 minutes.

Bring a Bit of Home With You: Do you each pick one present to open on Christmas Eve? Read a special story or break out new pajamas the night before the holiday? Take your best tradition along.

Ways to De-Stress Holidays with Young Children:

Be healthy:

- ✳ Keep bedtimes and other routines consistent and predictable. Humans need more rest during these shortest days of the year than at any other; insufficient rest can lead to holiday colds and fevers.
- ✳ Keep meals and snacks as healthy as possible; emphasize vegetables and fruits to balance holiday treats.
- ✳ Get outdoors with your child every day, even if only for a short walk.

Be available:

- ✳ Schedule your leave time from work for two days more than what you think you'll need.
- ✳ Consider giving your child several days of time with you as their primary holiday gift, rather than expensive toys.
- ✳ Plan for visits involving long-distance travel to happen after January 1st, when airfares are lower and tempers are slower. Even car trips can add major stress to holidays.
- ✳ Ask grandparents to visit your family, instead of your visiting them.
- ✳ Shop for gifts online.

Be relaxed:

- ✳ Have visiting relatives stay at a nearby hotel, so both you and they can have some down time.
- ✳ Consider having "dress-down" holiday meals at home; serve prepared foods from grocers (most stores take special orders for holiday meals).
- ✳ Purchase *comfortable* dress up clothing for you and your children to wear to formal family, community, and religious events.

Have fun:

- ✳ Board games ... pillow fights ... sledding ... making popcorn. Fun family times happen when there's plenty of unscheduled time and no distractions from the outside.
- ✳ Balance child time with adult time, making sure you have time with your partner to meet your needs as a couple.

Quick Tips: Reducing Holiday Stress

By [Deborah Dakins](#) Yahoo! Health

The holidays can be a joyful time, offering a chance to reconnect with friends and family. But they can also be stressful. You may feel pressure to buy and give gifts. Maybe you are worried about money. The holidays can also be hectic. There never seems to be enough time to get things done.

Think about the kinds of events that trigger stress for you during the holidays. Then you can focus on one or two things you can do that will help the most to reduce stress. Here are some ideas:

Preparing for the holidays

- **-Know your spending limit.** Lack of money is one of the biggest causes of stress during the holiday season. This year set a budget, and don't spend more than you've planned. It's okay to tell your child that a certain toy costs too much. Don't buy gifts that you'll spend the rest of the year trying to pay off.
- **-Give something personal.** You can show love and caring with any gift that is meaningful and personal. It doesn't have to cost a lot. Or use words instead of an expensive gift to let people know how important they are to you. Make a phone call or write a note and share your feelings.
- **Get organized.** Make lists or use an appointment book to keep track of tasks to do and events to attend.
- **Share the tasks.** You don't have to do everything yourself. Share your "to do" list with others. Spend time with friends and family while you share tasks like decorating, wrapping gifts, and preparing the holiday meal.
- **Learn to say no.** It's okay to say "no" to events that aren't important to you. This will give you more time to say "yes" to events that you do want to attend.
- **Be realistic.** Try not to put pressure on yourself to create the perfect holiday for your family. Focus instead on the traditions that make holidays special for you. And remember that just because it's a holiday, family problems don't go away. If you have a hard time being around your relatives, it's okay to set limits on your time at events and visits.

During the holidays

You may not be able to avoid stressful situations during the holidays. But you can plan to respond to them in a healthy way.

- **Take breaks from group activities.** Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Spend a little time by yourself if you can. Meditate, or do some relaxation breathing. Go for a short walk.
- **Keep a regular sleep, meal, and exercise schedule. Limit your alcohol.** Taking care of yourself will help you deal with stressful situations during the holidays.
- **Get support if you need it.** Holidays can sometimes trigger depression. They can be especially hard if you are already dealing with the death of a loved one or the breakup of a relationship. You may feel embarrassed to ask for help, or you may think that you'll get over "the blues" on your own. But most people need treatment to get better. Talk with your doctor about counseling and medicine for depression.

Resources

University of New Hampshire - Article
Balance Is Key To Meaningful Holidays With Children, Says Director Of UNH's Child Study And Development Center

http://www.unh.edu/news/news_releases/2005/november/bp_051128holidays.html

Tips for reducing stress at holiday time

http://www.keepkidshealthy.com/welcome/holiday_stress.html

National Network for Childcare – Article
Holiday stress and divorced families

http://www.nncc.org/Curriculum/sac12_holiday.stress.html

Family Fun Magazine Article: 10 New Family Traditions

<http://familyfun.go.com/arts-and-crafts/season/feature/famf109traditions/famf109traditions.html>

Money Issues Leading Cause of Holiday Stress for Americans

<http://www.apa.org/releases/holidaystress.html>

Holiday Stress: How to stay calm during the mad scramble of the holidays

<http://apahelpcenter.org/articles/article.php?id=8>

6 Holiday Sanity Savers:

<http://www.newsweek.com/id/71866>

Families find joy in pared-down holidays

http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2008-12-09-christmas-chanukah-blues_N.htm

Managing the Seemingly Inevitable Holiday Season Stress

http://stress.about.com/od/understandingstress/a/holiday_stress.htm

BOOKS:

The Book of New Family Traditions: How to Create Great Rituals for Holidays & Everyday
by Meg Cox and Sarah McMenemy

A Family Guide to the Biblical Holidays by Robin Sampson and Linda Pierce

Holidays & Celebrations: How to Make Books With Children (How to Make Books with Children Series) by Joy Evans

This seminar was presented by
Jennifer Alfonso, MBA, MSW, LCSW-C

Jennifer Alfonso is a nationally recognized expert and speaker on anger and stress management, conflict resolution, and effective communication. Ms. Alfonso is the Founder and Director of ANGER MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES, a program utilized by the States Attorneys Office of Maryland since 1997. Her programs focus on primary, secondary, and tertiary interventions for anger and violence at both work and home.

Ms. Alfonso, a formally trained mediator, currently facilitates weekly anger and stress management programs for adults and two adolescent anger management groups for adjudicated youth. Ms. Alfonso is a former board member of the Conflict Resolution Center of Montgomery County. In addition, Ms. Alfonso has expertise in organizational behavior and served as a part-time faculty member at a local college for courses in organizational management. For over a decade she worked as an instructor in Montgomery County Public Schools teaching courses in stress management, anger management, effective communication and conflict resolution.

Ms. Alfonso is a dynamic and engaging speaker who acts as a national consultant for both public and private organizations and has presented over nine hundred training workshops to organizations such as: The Department of Justice, Centers for Disease Control, Montgomery County Department of Fire and Rescue Services, Maryland's Department of Juvenile Services and The Association of Flight Attendants. In addition to her current work, she presents seminars for LifeWork Strategies.

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