



## **Family Dynamics in Regards to Time Away From Work and School**

With the holidays fast approaching, we know breaks from school and work are just around the corner! While this is an exciting and fun time for all, the hustle and bustle of the holidays can become overwhelming for children and adults alike. What with get togethers with extended family, changes in routine, high expectations, and not to mention the excitement of it all, children and adults may struggle to adjust. Below are a few tips that will help you and your family survive the holidays and make sure everyone has a MERRY time!

### **Tip #1: Find time to relax**

As mentioned before, the holidays have the potential to be as stressful as they are exciting! Be sure the family finds time to relax and enjoy being together to reduce stress. Try and establish a routine that balances fun and relaxation. Try not to overload the family with too many activities in one day and allow kids to take breaks from the action to enjoy activities that are part of their usual routine. Parents, this may include times where your kids spend time with friends, participate in their own hobbies, etc. There will be plenty of time over the break for time with family so it is okay to allow kids to continue with their usual activities.

### **Tip #2 Be flexible and patient**

The holidays are a time that require flexibility and patience. Time with family and friends increases which creates changes in family dynamics. Older children may be returning home from college on break and extended family may be making themselves

at home in yours. Ask family and guests what they need to feel comfortable and make accommodations when you are able. Compromises may need to be made due to the coming together of different personalities. Children may experience an increase in feelings of discomfort and inflexibility due to the fact they are having to share their space and accept changes to their routine. Make yourself available to talk with your children about their feelings and allow breaks when they are feeling frustrated or overwhelmed.

### **Tip #3 Be sensitive**

Emotions during the holidays tend to run high and can be difficult to manage, especially for children who are experiencing both the excitement and sometimes discomfort of the season. There is added stress from the busyness of running around, being among unfamiliar members of the family, and having to accept changes in routine, which can lead to changes in feelings and behaviors. Try to be sensitive to the emotions of family as well as your own to know when children may need to talk and when you may need a break from the action. Being sensitive to the emotions of others means being aware and validating when an individual expresses his or her feelings. Parents can model emotional regulation for their children by labelling their own feelings and discussing ways in which they choose to calm down (ex: taking a break, taking deep breaths, etc.). Children will look to their parents to know how to respond in unfamiliar situations.

### **Tip #4 Keep children involved**

Children love to be involved in the festivities and make great helpers! Enlist children to help with decorating, baking, wrapping presents, etc. Keeping children involved will help them feel part of the excitement and proud of what they are able to contribute! This will also make things easier on you!

The holidays are a time to enjoy being with family and friends. While the holidays have the potential to be stressful, they have a greater potential to be relaxing and fun by implementing the following tips above!

Wishing everyone a wonderful holiday season!

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