

Health Happenings

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(A Monthly Newsletter by Mary Ann Kuehnel, RN, CYSS Nurse)

The approaching holidays can be a wonderful time filled with family fun, celebrations and chances to reconnect with old friends; however, they can cause undue stress,- especially for young children. Do you know how to support your child through this timeframe? Thankfully, there are ways for you, the parent, and his/her daycare provider to do just that. Here are a few ideas:

- Provide routine. Although a certain amount of disruption during the holidays is bound to happen, parents can do their best to keep up with basic routines. Providers can provide structure by keeping the child on-schedule and making expectations clear.
- Keep the "jolly". Children are extremely astute and can pick up on mixed messages. Even though the message may be that this is a period of great "joy", a wide range of emotions may surface. Some of these emotions include concern, anxiety, guilt, resentment, loneliness and sadness. Seek support through family, friends, co-workers or professional counseling, as taking care of emotional health is a must!
- Retreat. For a very young child, the sights and sounds of the holiday season can lead to over-stimulation. You can make the home a place where they can wind down from the frenzied pace. Holiday rituals and family routines can become an opportunity for quiet, relaxed family time that the child can look forward to and that you, in turn, can use as an opportunity to break free from daily stress, enjoy the moment, and/or refuel for the next day.

If you follow the above principles, you'll have more time for something that can make the holiday time truly special: teaching your child how to give. Teaching your child how to give to others nourishes their emotional growth and development and automatically provides a means to reduce self-imposed stress. Need ideas? How about sending a care package to a soldier, collect canned goods for the local food pantry, donate to a favorite charity, pay for medications for an elderly family member or friend, or take a plate of goodies to a shut-in. It's a great time to look for ways to serve others and to help reduce holiday stress!