

Have a Peaceful Holiday Season

Holiday season may be the most wonderful time of the year; however, it may become exhausting and frustrating, especially for nontraditional families such as grandparents and other relatives raising children. Grandparents and children may experience a sense of loss during holidays because of the changes that have occurred in their lives. Grown-ups and children together may want to develop new ways to celebrate the holidays.

You may want to talk with your children about traditions you grew up with. If you do not have these traditions, you may want to create them. Traditions give meaning and can bring stability to families. They help build a family identity by simply establishing how your family communicates, makes decisions, and celebrates. They create a family history that is passed on through the generations. These traditions should be something simple that you enjoy, and something that you can do together, year after year. (They should cost little or no extra money). Here are some suggestions you might consider:

- ❖ Find time to take a walk in the neighborhood.
- ❖ Have a cup of hot cider and read or tell stories.
- ❖ Have a cookie baking night.
- ❖ Blow bubbles together-make a wire ring and mix warm water and dish washing liquid.
- ❖ Make a small family tree and decorate it with family pictures and drawings.
- ❖ Make time for a movie and popcorn night, or enjoy a favorite holiday show.
- ❖ Craft simple paper ornaments and cards to give to neighbors or teachers.
- ❖ Spend some time on the holidays with people who do not have their family nearby and may feel lonely during this time of the year.

Doing this together shows your children that holidays are not about material gifts but all about family, sharing and giving!

Other important aspects that you may want to consider:

- ❖ Try to form realistic expectations for holidays by talking with your partner and/or children about what should happen.
- ❖ Try to plan in advance the visitation arrangements with the child's parents so you have a clear schedule for the holidays. Talk with the children about how this time will be managed and give them time for mental and physical adjustment for all these transitions.

- ❖ Be prepared to talk with your children about how they feel if they are disappointed. Children may be disappointed because their parents do not visit or send a gift or it may be because you needed to limit the contact with other family. The disappointment and sense of loss they may experience could result in high level of anxiety and possible anger. Help them explore and identify the feelings they have by being emotionally present and ready to listen. You may be able to help them heal and provide them with a harbor of safety.
- ❖ Be kind to yourself and take a break, even for 15 minutes. You may want to find a quiet area of your house where you can sit down and focus on your breathing; it may seem like not enough time but it could have a calming effect on you.
- ❖ Remember that you are only trying to make it work by planning and offering values that are dear to you and work best for your grandchild. Do not hold yourself responsible if these values are not accepted by others- the rest of the family. Accept the fact that you may not please everyone.

The important thing about building holiday traditions is spending time with each other and creating dear memories that belong to you and your children.

Have a bright holiday season!



304 Hancock Street, Suite 2B
Bangor, ME 04401
1-866-298-0896
www.mainekids-kin.org

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