

SHARING YOUR TRADITIONS

The best gift we give our children at holiday time is not a toy or a book. It is the tradition of the holiday itself.

Offer to share some of your traditions with the children in your child's program. Share a song from your family tradition, or make a recipe together of a special holiday treat. If you know a second language, teach the children some words or a song in this language. By doing this you can give your child a strong sense of pride in his own tradition. You teach far more than the words to a song or how to make something: you teach respect for the traditions of others.



Getting Beyond the "Gimmies"

Many families celebrate holidays that involve gift giving. Children are naturally excited at these times. Adults may wonder if children learn greed, rather than the joy of giving, during these holidays. Here are a few ways to get past the holiday "gimmies":

1. Let your child help make homemade gifts. Children learn the value and pleasure of creating for others, and these homemade gifts are sure to be treasured by family and friends.
2. Involve your children in giving gifts to those who are less fortunate. For example, give to a food drive or a coat or mitten drive.
3. Start traditions that add meaning to your gift giving. You might pick a small number that has something to do with the holiday season, and give only that many gifts.
4. Save some holiday fun for after the holiday to avoid a sudden let-down for your child.
5. You don't need to buy everything on a child's wish list. Pick out one or two gifts to buy. This

helps your child feel respected but avoids the message that every whim and wish is equally important.

6. Ask yourself if you sometimes give your child gifts when you are feeling guilty. Families who have just experienced divorce, death, or even a move are often likely to overspend on gifts, using expensive toys as a way of making up for sad times. Since time with you is the best gift, ask yourself how you can make more time for simple fun with your child.

7. Give fun and helpful coupons as gifts. Make and give a coupon for a trip to the playground or for a special game night. Coupons to help others are also most welcome. Offer to cook a meal, do laundry, or clean for a friend in need. When children help, they learn about caring for others as well as important life skills.

8. It's better to do things with the kids than for the kids. If children are left out of cooking, planning, and shopping for the holidays, they may think only about gifts. Let them make the table centerpiece or place cards, help prepare

the food, and help with other holiday tasks.

9. Show children how much fun gift giving can be. Plan gifts for grandparents and friends. Talk about how much fun it will be to watch them open the present and how much they will enjoy it.



What if my child is disappointed by holiday gifts?

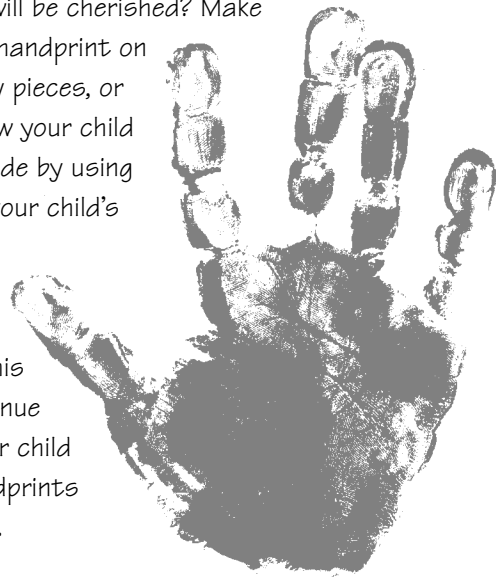
Often, children ask for too many expensive toys. No one wants to disappoint a child. But when your child is disappointed, you can help her learn how to handle this sad feeling. Children often will make themselves feel better through play. Pretending that a stuffed toy is a real horse, or that a miniature car is a fancy remote control car, can help children express their disappointment. Most important, children need your support: simply putting feelings into words helps children deal with those feelings. It is also important for children to understand that we can't have everything we want. Help children understand that the family needs money for a place to live, clothes, and food. Children need to know that you will be there for them when they are disappointed.

He or She? Him or Her?

Please note: In this and all Better Kid Care publications we take turns referring to children as "he" or "she." When we use he or she, we include all children.

GREAT HOLIDAY CRAFT IDEA

Looking for a present that will be cherished? Make something with your child's handprint on it: t-shirts, pot holders, clay pieces, or simply a piece of paper. Show your child how to spread her fingers wide by using your own hand. Then press your child's entire hand into a dish of paint, and make a print by placing your child's hand onto the desired surface. This is a great tradition to continue year after year. You and your child will enjoy looking at the handprints over the years as they grow.



Helping Children Deal with Holiday Stresses

By keeping these tips in mind, you and your children can keep the stress down for a happy holiday.

1. Keep routines as regular as possible.
2. Allow more time for energetic, physical play. This helps children use their built-up energy.
3. Talk about the changes to the routine. You might say, "Today we will eat a big meal together at Uncle Leroy's house. We might be back late, so we won't have time to read a story tonight."
4. Some young children might act even younger during exciting family holidays. Expect some thumb

sucking or crying, hitting, and toilet accidents. This is not unusual around holiday time and goes away when things get back to normal. Instead of saying, "Dylan, I thought you were all finished with thumb sucking" try, "Sometimes it feels like there is a lot going on. Maybe you need a quiet time." Then settle down with your child for a cuddle and a book.

5. Cut back on what you do for the holidays. Expecting less of yourself will mean that there will be less stress for everyone in the family. Choose the things you enjoy the most, and do them.

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