



Laugh and LEARN

December 2024 Parent Packet

Check your parent packets for new info each month. And you'll get some additional information in your inbox each week after the program...stay tuned and make sure you're checking those emails!



Next Play Date

Friday, January 17 | 9:00AM
Grayson County Extension Office

Cooperative Extension Service

Agriculture and Natural Resources
Family and Consumer Sciences
4-H Youth Development
Community and Economic Development

MARTIN-GATTON COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT

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Parenting for the Holidays: Reducing Stress and Increasing Joy

The holiday season can be a magical time, filled with traditions, celebrations, and family gatherings. However, it can also be stressful for parents, with busy schedules, financial pressures, and the challenge of managing high expectations. Finding ways to reduce stress while increasing joy is essential for creating a holiday experience that is enjoyable for both parents and children.

Reducing Stress

One of the most effective ways to reduce stress during the holidays is by setting realistic expectations. Parents often feel pressure to create a "perfect" holiday but trying to live up to this ideal can lead to exhaustion and disappointment. It is important to focus on what truly matters – spending quality time together – rather than striving for perfection in decorations, gifts, or events. Simplifying traditions and cutting out activities that feel more like obligations than sources of joy can significantly reduce stress. Planning ahead is another key strategy for lowering stress. By creating a holiday schedule that includes meal planning, shopping, and downtime, parents can avoid last-minute chaos. Involving children in the preparation process, whether it's decorating, cooking, or wrapping gifts, can also lighten the load while fostering family bonding. The American Psychological Association suggests that setting aside time for self-care, such as exercise, meditation, or simply taking a break, is crucial for maintaining balance and reducing stress.

Increasing Joy

To increase joy during the holidays, focus on creating meaningful experiences and traditions that emphasize connection and gratitude. These can be simple but powerful, like baking cookies together, going for a family walk to see holiday lights, or reading favorite holiday stories. Engaging in shared activities helps build positive memories and strengthens family bonds.

Another way to increase joy is by practicing gratitude. Encourage children to express thankfulness for what they have and involve them in acts of giving. Whether it's donating toys, making cards for neighbors, or volunteering as a family, teaching children about the joy of giving can shift the focus away from materialism and foster a deeper sense of fulfillment. Research from the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley shows that gratitude is strongly associated with happiness, even in children.

Finally, staying present in the moment and savoring small joys, such as a warm cup of cocoa or a cozy evening on the couch, can make the holiday season more joyful. By letting go of unnecessary stress and focusing on connection and gratitude, parents can create a holiday atmosphere that is joyful, meaningful, and memorable for the entire family.

References:

American Psychological Association (APA). (2018). Tips for managing holiday stress. Retrieved from apa.org

Greater Good Science Center. (2018). The Science of Gratitude. Retrieved from ggsc.berkeley.edu

Source: David Weisenhorn, Ph.D.; Specialist for Parenting and Child Development

The Dinner Table Project

A program to encourage families to eat together,
have fun and grow closer through conversation.
December 2024

Questions to Ask Everyday

What are 3 things for which you are thankful today?

What did you learn today?

How did you make someone smile today?



- One small onion, diced
- One pound ground turkey
- 1 tablespoon of garlic powder
- 2 Teaspoons of chili powder
- 2 teaspoons of dried oregano
- 1 (10 ounce) can diced tomatoes with green chilies, do not drain (optional)
- 1 (15 ounce) can diced tomatoes, do not drain
- 2 cups of water
- 8 ounces whole wheat spaghetti, uncooked and broken in half
- 3/4 cup of shredded cheese

December is the month that we want to focus on self-care:

December is the month when we all need to set aside some time for self-care. Some self-care ideas are journaling, taking ten minutes to yourself, read a book, light a candle, learn a new skill, have a pajama day, and spend time with loved ones. Take time this month for self-care!

Conversation Starters

Who is the nicest person you know?

What was the best present you've been given?

Describe yourself in three words.



One Pot Cheesy Spaghetti

1. In a large pot, add onion and ground turkey. Cook on medium-high heat until turkey has browned.
2. Add garlic powder, chili powder, and oregano. Stir to mix.
3. Add both cans of diced tomatoes, water, and spaghetti. bring mixture to a boil, stir occasionally to make sure that spaghetti is submerged. Reduce heat to a simmer and cover.
4. Cook for about 15 minutes or until spaghetti is done, stirring occasionally.
5. Add cheese, turn off the heat, and cover with a lid until cheese melts (about 2-4 minutes)

Winter Family Activity: Indoor Camping

When outdoor camping isn't an option, bring camping indoors. This can be the perfect experience for the whole family.



- Build a blanket fort
- Make indoor s'mores
- Add ambiance with nature sounds
- Watch a winter movie
- Make shadow puppets



Developmental Relationships

Developmental relationships are the roots of thriving and resilience for young people, regardless of their background or circumstances. Through these relationships, young people discover who they are, cultivate abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them.

Share Power: Treat me with respect and give me a say.

- **Respect me** - Take me seriously and treat me fairly.
- **Include me** - Involve me in decisions that affect me.
- **Collaborate** - Work with me to solve problems and reach goals.
- **Let me Lead** - Create opportunities for me to take action and lead.



DTP...On The Go!

December may be the most wonderful time of the year for family bonding. Families often find themselves traveling more in a car during this time or spending more time indoors due to the unpredictable weather. Regardless, if families are traveling in the car or spending time indoors there are many creative bonding activities that families can incorporate. The song association game is a great opportunity for families to come up with a list of songs by working in teams of two or three. The game starts out with the first speaker saying one holiday themed word and each team will try to identify as many holiday songs as possible that include the identified word. The team who identifies the most songs wins the rounds. When creating the lists of songs, teams will need to be prepared to utilize their vocal skills.



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