

School Holiday Parent Kit

TACKLING HOLIDAY STRESS

The everyday responsibilities of parenting can sometimes feel endless. Considering all the extra demands placed on you during the school holidays and festive season, you may feel more stressed than usual.

REMEMBER

What your family and your children really want most is to spend time with you.

Holiday stress may be caused by having to change work routines or child care arrangements, stretching the budget to meet the costs of the festive season, entertaining children or dealing with older children staying home alone.

Although we cling to the idea that the family will spend the holidays together and everyone will get along, it can be a difficult time.

When you are stressed it seems as though you have to sacrifice the things you enjoy. But often the things you give up, such as keeping fit and spending time with friends, are activities that can help you manage stress or keep you from becoming frustrated with your children.

It's also important to remember that grief can be particularly heightened at this time of

year. The loss of a family member, a divorce, the loss of a job or being separated from family and friends can be particularly stressful.

By taking some steps now, you can help to minimise stress later. The key is to recognise the triggers. Do what you can to avoid or lessen their impact and learn some techniques to help you relax should you start to feel the tension rising.

Here are some simple tips to keep you healthy and manage stress. By looking after yourself you will be in a better position to care for your children.

- **Set priorities:** learn to say "no" to some things - choose quality over quantity. Your main priority may simply be spending time with your children and enjoying each other's company.
- **Plan ahead:** take charge of your holidays in advance by making lists of things to do and setting aside some time each day for them - nothing creates more stress than last minute shopping and preparations. When entertaining children, one different activity each day will keep them excited.
- **Stay in budget:** draw up a budget to make sure you don't overspend over the festive season. Choose simple, thoughtful or useful gifts over elaborate, expensive surprises - even Santa Claus has limited funds.
- **Delegate:** you don't have to do it all yourself - there is only so much time and people generally appreciate the opportunity to help out. If you are having a family get together, it might be a good idea to ask everyone to bring along some food rather than preparing it all yourself.
- **Have realistic expectations:** if there is tension within your family it is more than likely that this will only escalate during the holiday period. You might consider visiting your relatives separately if they do not get on well or keeping them occupied when together.

When making new year's resolutions, think positively about what you can really achieve. Unrealistic goals can cause disappointment.
- **Look after yourself:** to take care of others you need to first take care of yourself. A healthy diet, regular exercise, learning to relax and getting enough sleep will also help to reduce stress.
- **Exercise:** research shows that exercising several times a week (even just a walk) can reduce stress and tension and improve your mood.
- **Deep breathing:** spend five to ten minutes several times a day practising the art of deep breathing. It helps to raise your energy levels.
- **Positive attitude:** try to think positive thoughts. Your thoughts influence your feelings - if you dwell on unhappy thoughts, you start to feel unhappy. Your attitude can be transferred to others and this is not helpful with children at home.
- **Talk to others:** if you are feeling stressed it can help to speak with people who can understand the position you are in, such as friends or family members.
- **Laughter:** nothing reduces stress as quickly or as effectively as a good laugh!

CONTACT NUMBERS

Lifeline 13 11 14 (24 hours, 7 days per week)
 Parent Line 1300 1300 52 (24 hours, 7 days per week)
 Salvo Crisis Line 9331 2000 (24 hours, 7 days per week) or
 Salvo Care Line 1300 363 622 (24 hours, 7 days per week)

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