

Tool Box Tip # 12 GIVE YOUR CHILDREN THE GIFT OF A HEALTHY & HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON!

The holidays can be a stressful time for families. If you have a positive attitude it will set a positive feeling in your home. The holidays are an opportunity not an obligation!

- **Teach your children about a family tradition or develop a new tradition.**
 - o Make a special meal, read a special holiday story together, do something for someone else, make a holiday craft, bake cookies, or plan and make a special meal together.
- **Get plenty of exercise.**
 - o Children who are stressed need some type of physical activity or exercise to release their anxiety.
- **Make sure the television and video games** your children are watching or playing are portraying themes of the holiday season of peace, hope, joy and love.
- **Healthy meals make for healthy children.** During the holidays there tends to be a lot of sugary holiday treats available. Try to balance out these treats with healthy meals and snacks.
- **Make sure you and your family take time to rest and relax.** Tired children and caregivers are a recipe for family fights and temper tantrums.
 - o Remember to take time out and slow down to enjoy the meaning of the season.
 - o Take time as a family to laugh together, play a game together, read the Sunday comics to your children, make up jokes or go to a library.
 - o Try to stay in a normal routine. Children like the predictability of their regular schedules so try to keep mealtimes, bedtimes, and getting up as close to their usual times as possible.
- **Communicate with your family** – don't assume that everyone knows the plans for the holiday season. Discuss family priorities and give the children choices in things they might like to do. It is ok to talk about feelings - take time to share positive thoughts with your family.
- **Plan early** – don't leave everything to the last minute. Holiday time is busy and the more organized you are, the less stressed everyone will be.
- **Emphasize that gifts from the heart and those made by hands are best gifts of all.**
- **Remember to give your child the gift that every child wants – the gift of your time.**
 - o Every child wants to feel connected, valued and loved. These feelings come from spending time with the people they love.

