

FAP Parent Tips

December 2008

Surviving the “Not So Jolly” Portions of the Holiday Season



Shopping Trips With Small Children

Beth Wildman, a mom who is also a psychology professor at Kent State University, reminds us that shopping is quite tedious for children. “All they see around them are knees.” She offers these tips for shopping with young children:

Plan ahead: Don’t take your child shopping during his usual naptime or when he is tired, hungry or felling ill.

Set rules: Before leaving on a shopping trip, give your child only a few rules to remember and repeat them often. Praise her for staying close or being quiet. Bring a sweet treat or stickers to reward good rule followers.

Exit strategy: If your child seriously misbehaves, be prepared to leave the store or even go home. Keep your holiday schedule somewhat flexible so you can try shopping another day.

No marathons: Children cannot walk as fast or as far as their parents can. Set a goal of buying only one or two gifts in just a few stores.

Activities help: If you want to buy a shirt for Grandpa, ask your child to look for red shirts with you. Ask him for gift-wrapping ideas. Discuss what you’ll do later in the day after shopping. Play a game of “I Spy” as you go from store to store.

Plan breaks: Find Grandpa’s shirt, then go for a ride on the carousel or get a snack. Give your child a few minutes when he or she can behave like a kid.

Five Tips to Help Your Child Survive Family Holiday Gatherings

1. Let your child know what to expect at the gathering—who is coming, what the activities are, some topics he can talk about with family members, and how you expect him to behave.

2. Make sure he has eaten well, is not overtired, and has time to “blow off steam” before the gathering.

3. Bring an activity that your child enjoys and can engage other family members in.

4. Have an agreed-upon “signal” for when your child needs your help to get out of an uncomfortable conversation.

5. At the event, help your child identify a safe and comfortable space he can go to when he needs a break.

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FAP Parent Tips is a publication of the MWR FAP Office. For questions regarding the information in this newsletter, contact Shari Hutchinson, FAP Manager, by phone or email to shari.hutchinson.ctr@dla.mil.

Tips for Surviving the Holiday Blues as a Single Parent: Getting by When Your Kids Are Visiting Their Other Parent on the Holiday

Find other ways to celebrate the holiday together: Work with your kids to plan an alternative holiday celebration in advance of the big day. Begin by asking each of your children to tell you which aspects of the holiday they most appreciate, and work to incorporate those activities into your own personal celebration time. Keep in mind that finding a creative way to celebrate the holiday together is just as important to your kids as it is to you!

Take care of yourself: Use the time apart to pamper yourself. Sleep late and treat yourself to things you really enjoy, but rarely get to do. Simply taking in a movie or curling up with a good book can be rejuvenating activities that also serve to clear your mind and restore your sense of well-being.

Get together with friends: Don't spend the day of the holiday alone. Instead, get together with some friends or your extended family. If you enjoy hosting events, invite some friends over for an informal wine and cheese party. Everyone needs a break at this time of year, and sometimes the most casual gatherings with friends become our fondest memories of the season!

Count your blessings: This is also a perfect time to reflect on all that is good in your life. Sit down and make a list of the ways in which you've grown personally in the last year. It's been challenging, and there have been steps along the way that you wouldn't wish upon your worst enemy. But at the same time, you've become a stronger person. Take some time to acknowledge how far you've come and treasure the blessings you've been given.

Help someone else: One of the best ways to curb your own sadness is to focus on helping others cope with challenges of their own. Visit various web sites to find local opportunities to volunteer your time, from holding babies at the local hospital to serving meals or passing out blankets to the homeless.

Be productive: You may find that tackling a large project, such as cleaning out your "junk drawers" or painting a room, is a therapeutic way to spend your time. In fact, some projects, like getting caught up on your monthly bills, may even help you meet your goals for the new year.

Refocus: While your kids are away, take some time to reflect on your personal goals and priorities. What is really, ultimately important to you? And does the way you live your life every day reflect those priorities? If so, how? And if not, how can you take small steps toward aligning your day-to-day actions with your highest aspirations for yourself and your family?

The Family Advocacy Program (FAP) at DSCC is a DOD program dedicated to domestic violence prevention, spousal and child abuse prevention, education, prompt reporting, investigation, intervention and treatment. The program at DSCC provides a variety of services to DSCC, DFAS, tenant organizations, active duty and reserve military and their families to enhance their relationship and parenting skills and improve their quality of life. This mission is accomplished through a variety of groups, seminars, workshops, brief counseling and intervention services to include spousal and child abuse awareness, positive parenting, domestic violence, elder care, depression, grief/loss, couples communication skills, stress management, anger management, healthy communication, sexual assault awareness, and deployment assistance for military and civilians.

Because everyone faces problems and challenges in their lives, the FAP is dedicated to helping the DSCC community with those challenges. While these problems are usually resolved without assistance, they are sometimes too big or too complex to solve without help. Finding the right kind of help for complex situations is not an easy matter. Finding specialized, qualified counseling, how much it will cost, what to expect from counseling, and how to determine if the counselor is a good match for the client are typical concerns when seeking help.

If you are an active duty or retired service member or family member, the FAP Manager can help answer these questions, as well as provide free of charge consultation and referral service. If you are a civilian DOD employee, the program manager can answer your questions and refer you to the civilian Employee Assistance Program.

All services provided by the Family Advocacy Program on DSCC are free and confidential.